



# PULPIT SKETCHES.

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OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

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FIRST SERIES.

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## PREFACE.

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If any writings may plead exemption from the frost of criticism, they are those which seek a shelter under the altar. When men, whose business is literature and supreme object fame, take up the pen, the critical world have a right to arraign their pretensions, weigh their claims, and sit in solemn judgment upon their productions. Yet let the humble writer, whose design is to reanimate the latent fires of devotion, and turn the earth born thoughts heavenward, be spared the rigors of a tribu-

nal which, unlike the posthumous inquest of Egypt, decides the fate of the living as well as the dead. The minister, who cultivates a sincere desire to benefit his fellow men to the extent of his voice and pen in the brief period of his existence, should never feel the dread of a literary inquisition, damping his zeal, or abating his energy. To a higher tribunal than that of letters is he amenable; at which it may appear that the boding cry and the raven wing of criticism have induced many to bury in inglorious sloth the talents committed to their improvement.

It is not expected that the pulpit sketches of one whose head does not yet bear the snows of time, will be prominent sources of instruction and pleasure to age and experience; yet mature years, it is hoped, will find nothing repulsive to wisdom or the clear views of advanced life in thoughts chiefly drawn from the ancient oracles of God. But the improvement of the young, the blooming pride and future hope of our beloved country, was not

unconnected with the design of these sketches. There is a season in life when the thoughts are indisposed to encounter the deep things of theology; a syllogism fails to be comprehended, and a subtle deduction is a weariness to the elastic spirit—yet the eye will rest pleasantly on the lighter lessons of divinity, and the mind will rove with a degree of satisfaction through the green, flowering fields of holy literature, or along the side of “still waters.”

It is possible there may be a chasm in the theological writings of the present day, of the more engaging class of moral and devotional compositions, which these sketches are destined to fill. There is enough of argument in the church, and the “sacramental host” is enveloped in the dust of a thousand champions in polemics; the boundary lines of denomination are explored and rectified with unerring science, and “Græek meets Greek” on the neutral ground; the church scarcely can desire a greater deluge of religious intelligence than

that which rolls, at the present moment, to her extreme borders; yet the questions arise with unusual emphasis—Does the voice of consolation sufficiently mingle with, and temper, the thunder of warfare and the majestic movements of the age? Does the sound of the summonings, the trumpetings and the rousing up of this last great crusade, intermit to the music of the christian charities and the home virtues?

To furnish a token of friendship, a gift of affection, a book of devotional sketches for the vestry and the social evening meeting—to extend and perpetuate his ministerial labors in the Church—have been the author's motives that gave birth to this book; and it is fearlessly as well as affectionately committed to the keeping of those who know how to make deductions for the imperfections of any human production.

Not unmindful of that day, when every work shall be subject to the investigations and

decisions of eternity, the author dedicates this book to the cause of piety ; and he would place it near the holy altar of that church whose walls are salvation, and whose gates praise.

*Louisville, 1839.*





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ISAIAH, v. 4, 5.

What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard; I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down.

The prophet Isaiah struck the solemn harp of prophecy with a master's hand. His mind was of such a sublime and tuneful mould, that had he lived in Greece, he would have been its Homer; or, in a later age, the Milton of classic England. The Spirit of the Highest had indeed baptized him with the waters that flow "fast by the throne of God," and given him power to lift the misty coverings from futurity—to hold communion with events and circumstances that were to be developed to mankind in some dark periods of the coming eternity; yet native genius had set the impress of immortality upon the original structure of his mind, and placed in his hands the elements of moral

power. Language trembled under the weight of his glowing thoughts; the figures of rhetorical art were exhausted; the scenery of nature, from the mountain's top, the throne of the clouds, to the deep valley and the deeper world of waters, furnished his bold and impetuous imagery.

In the chapter from which the text is selected, the state of the Jewish nation is represented under the type of a vineyard:

Under the figure of a vine is represented the Jewish nation itself:

Under that of soil, the country promised them by Jehovah:

By the natural weakness of the vine, is represented their need of a helper:

By the care taken of it, the unbounded goodness of God:

By the unfruitfulness of this vine, the impious ingratitude of that people:

And under the type of laying waste the vineyard, the signal punishment in store for their aggravated transgressions.

#### THE VINE.

It was a goodly vine, planted by the hand of God. It was written, thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt; thou hast cast out the heathen and planted it; thou hast caused it to take deep root and it filled the land: the hills were cover-

ed with its shadow, and the boughs thereof were like goodly cedars.

God chose his servant Abraham, to be the progenitor of the people represented by this beautiful allegory. He had commanded him to leave his native country, and to journey to a strange land, and in obedience to the voice of God, he set out without wavering, not knowing whither he was going. He was tried in the tenderest point, by being commanded to sacrifice the life of an only son—an only child, and he proved faithful. God made a covenant with him, and promised, that his seed should inherit the land where he was a stranger, even the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession: and that through him, all the nations of the earth should be blessed. ➤

#### THE GOODNESS OF THE SOIL IN WHICH IT WAS PLANTED.

This has a direct and particular reference to the land of Canaan, which was one of the most fertile countries in the world. It was so beautiful and so productive, that it was emphatically styled the vineyard of the Lord, the garden of the world, a good land and large, a land flowing with milk and honey. It was a country rich in corn, wine, and oil, covered with trees, plants, fruits, and flowers in the greatest profusion. The whole face of the country was diversified with a multitude of valleys, and hills, and



mountains; adorned with the most beautiful landscapes, and teeming with the riches, both of nature and of art.

Its skies were clear and serene. Its hills were full of fountains, whence issued myriads of crystal rivulets and streams, meandering through the verdant vales and pleasant meadows below: and the glassy bosoms of its placid pools reflected the azure canopy of the ethereal vault. Universal joy and gladness filled the land. Songs and hallelujahs and the thrilling music, like that of Miriam's martial timbrel, swept up to heaven's blue arch.

Envious enemies soon perceived that God was with them, and were constrained, like Balaam, to exclaim, How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys, are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign aloes, which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters. Thus while they stood aloof and beheld the security and grandeur which, like a broad belt of living gold, encircled Israel, they wondered, they hated, but dared not molest.

#### ITS WEAKNESS.

The goodness of the vine, and the soil in which it was planted, could not protect it against the winds of heaven, or the ravages of the invader. The vine is a tender plant and easily injured. Its branches are so feeble that they need

supporting, and require many pains and much labor to preserve them in life and vigor.

This was applicable to the Israelites. When they came out of Egypt, they had no civil constitution, no laws, no government. They had been debased by long captivity, and thus rendered incapable of any heroic act, unless stimulated by some powerful motive. And such was their inconstancy, that at the slightest misfortune they looked back with unconquerable desires to the land where they had groaned so long under the lash of despotism. And even after they had been trained up for empire, and were put in possession of the promised Canaan, they were as much under the necessity of divine protection as when they were wandering in the wilderness.

Did they attempt any important movement in their own strength? They uniformly failed. Did they commence a war? They were certainly defeated. Did they make a boast of their strength, and glory in the prowess of their warlike deeds? A sudden and unexpected stroke from an unseen hand withering their laurels, was the inevitable consequence of their pride and presumption. For, saith the Lord, I will not give my glory to another, nor my praise to graven images. All their self-dependent schemes met

the fate they deserved, they were broken in pieces. But when they went forward in the name and in the strength of the God of the armies of Israel, success and victory ever attended them.

#### THE CARE TAKEN OF IT.

In order that this vine might grow and flourish and bring forth good fruit, the most careful and unremitted attention was paid to it by the servants of God, spoken of as the dressers of the vineyard. They dug about its roots, and pruned its branches, rising up early and lying down late. What could have been done more, saith the master of the vineyard, for my vineyard that I have not done in it.

The civil constitution of the Jews was of divine origin, and their religious institutions well calculated to retain in their breasts grateful remembrances of their Almighty benefactor. Their deliverance from Egyptian bondage—from the host of Pharaoh—the waters of the Red Sea, and from the dangers of the dreary desert, were continually brought to their view. Their children were early taught the history of their deliverances. The book of the law, ending with awful threatenings and gracious promises, was daily read in the hearing of the People.

Extraordinary means were used to preserve

this people in the pure exercise of their religion and laws. Holy prophets, divinely commissioned, were raised from time to time to arrest their attention and ring an alarm in their ears. Signal displays of the power and justice of the Almighty were made to pass frequently before their eyes.—They had line upon line, and precept upon precept. He showed his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not so dealt with any people.

#### ITS UNFRUITFULNESS.

This vine was a wholesome one. It was planted in a fertile soil, and the most unremitting care and attention were bestowed upon it; yet this very vine, under all these advantages, proved unfruitful.

How applicable was this, to the children of Israel. Although their fathers were the favorites of heaven, although they were placed in the most eligible circumstances for divine culture, possessing advantages rarely bestowed upon mortals, they were a proud, wicked and perverse generation,—Notwithstanding the mighty efforts that had been made to instill into their minds the purest principles, and to preserve them a distinct people, free from the prejudices, ignorance and superstition of the heathen world, they became strange plants of a degenerate vine,

either producing no fruit, or bringing forth sour grapes, which, when pressed, made drunk the nations around them.

In process of time, they descended from the lofty eminence they had held for ages, and after exhibiting, at various times, the most detestable features of moral depravity, they at length, gave themselves up, wholly to their lusts, and losing all sense of shame, sunk into the grossest idolatry and rebellion, rendering themselves worthy of the most condign punishment. In addition to all this, they filled to the brim the measure of their iniquities, by despising and rejecting their Messiah, and scourging and crucifying the Son of God.

#### ITS DESTRUCTION.

I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up: I will break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down, saith the Lord.

It is easy to conceive, how the wild beasts of the forest will desolate a vineyard, when its fences are thrown down and removed. Here, under the figure of laying waste a vineyard, God condescends to lay before his people, the inevitable consequences of persisting in their sin, and to warn them against it.

This solemn threatening was awfully realized by the Jews. The spirit of the Lord having been so long grieved and insulted, now

takes his everlasting flight from them. They are left naked and exposed to the

“ Tremendous threatening! black as night it stands  
Fierce as ten furies, terrible as hell,  
And shakes a fearful dart,”————

even the dart of divine indignation over a guilty land. The blood of the holy prophets is found in their garments. They had imprecated the blood of the Lord of life and glory upon their devoted heads. The day of their visitation having expired, the destroying Angel was now commissioned to go forth and slay them in all their cities. A dreadful, a blind infatuation seized them. God made their attachment to their formal, heartless ceremonies, a mean of their final overthrow. While they were engaged in the celebration of the passover, they would do nothing in defence of their city. Titus took this occasion to enter Jerusalem with his legions, fired the temple, destroyed the city and spread desolation and dismay throughout Judea.—The few wretched Jews, who escaped the edge of the sword, were either taken captive by their enemies or scattered over the earth, to wander like the blasted Cain, abhorred and hated by every people.

Their glory hath vanished like the mist from the mountain. The besom of destruction hath swept away their honors. The oblivious pall hath long since covered them.

Obscurity hath spread her dark mantle upon the land of Palestine, and the cursed crescent of the Moslem waves over the crumbling fragments of Jewish grandeur.

“ Weep for the harp of Judah’s broken shell ;  
Mourn—where their God hath dwelt, the godless dwell.  
Tribes of the wandering foot and weary breast,  
How shall ye flee away and be at rest !  
The wild dove hath her nest, the fox his cave,  
Mankind their country—Israel but the grave !”

And why is this? Because notwithstanding all that had been done for this peculiar people, they would neither love, nor obey, nor worship God according to his requirements. Thus Jerusalem, fallen from her once exalted station, and weltering in the blood of her children, raises her warning voice to all succeeding nations. She speaks from the records of her fathers; from the broken tribes of her wandering sons.

And not her voice alone proclaims the emptiness of human glory, the catastrophe of human wickedness. Other kingdoms have been broken; other cities have been buried; other nations have been extirpated. Where are Troy, Babylon, Athens, Thebes, Persepolis, and Palmyra? Their ruins are sepulchred with the ashes of their founders.

“ Ah ! then in desolation cold  
The desert serpent dwells alone,  
Where grass o’ergrows each mouldering stone,  
And stones themselves to ruin grown,  
Are grey and deathlike old,”

Palmyra, the seat of proud kings, the emporium of science, the envy of her neighbors, the wonder of the world, is no more. Her stately ruins may form a picture, her fame may point a moral, but her power and her glory have long passed away. Faded is her beauty, withered her strength, and humbled her pride. Her inscriptions are grown unintelligible, her heroes are forgotten.

With these reflections, let us take a short view of our own standing as a nation. O, that we may be admonished to pursue that righteousness which exalteth a nation, and to avoid that sin which is a reproach to any people !

OUR FOREFATHERS LIKE THOSE OF THE JEWS  
WERE PIOUS.

Those intrepid men who first planted the rose of Sharon in this land of strangers, and unfurled the banner of the cross in these western wilds, were disciples of Jesus—a band of holy pilgrims in quest of freedom, and the rights of conscience. They were exiles from their native homes; and many of them poor and penniless, but they were rich in faith and heirs of the promises. Few high sounding titles distinguished them from their fellows; but theirs was a higher distinction than princes can confer—their names were enrolled in heaven.



Guided by the good providence of God, they came forth from among their persecutors, traversed the wide waste of waters, touched upon these happy shores, and here planted the goodliest vineyard under heaven.

“ 'Twas then, by faith impelled, by freedom fired,  
By hope supported, and by God inspired,—  
'Twas then, the pilgrims left their fathers' graves,  
To seek a *Home* beyond the waste of waves;  
And where it rose, all rough and wintry, *Here*,  
They swelled devotion's song, and dropped devotion's tear.”

#### IS NOT OUR VINEYARD FRUITFUL?

What country on earth can boast of such richness and variety of soil ! Here we may range as through an extensive garden, and expatiate midst flowers and fruits, the products of every clime. Here too, mines are daily pouring forth the purest of metals, and quarries the richest of marble. Here are forests of vast extent, whose waving tops brush the loitering clouds. Is not this a goodly heritage, which our pious fathers have procured for us by their courage, their industry, and their perseverance ? A little more than two centuries ago, and the foot of civilized man had not pressed these shores : nor the genius of religion as yet erected her temples. Our rivers and our extensive lakes were unfrequented and silent, save when the noise of the Indian's paddle, broke the stillness of the scene ; or when the savage war-whoop echo-

ed from the surrounding hills, and reverberated along their solitary shores. But now these waters supply the innumerable wheels of the busy manufacturer, or bear on their bosoms, the luxuries of every clime. Now we behold the cattle on Columbia's thousand hills, or scattered over her wide extended plains, while plenty opens her boundless stores, and with a lavish hand distributes her richest blessings to her favored sons.

“ O stranger! stay thee, and the scene around  
Contemplate well, and if perchance thy home  
Salute thee with a father's honored name,  
Go call thy sons—instruct them what a debt  
They owe their ancestors.”

ARE WE NOT PECULIARLY FAVORED OF THE LORD ?

Yes, my brethren, our blessings are innumerable. The valor of our fathers has long since broken the iron yoke of European bondage. Every nation of the earth regards us with interest, and every despot feels the insecurity of his throne, as he contemplates our growing strength, and observes the progressive march of our republican principles in the old world. Once they dared to abuse our Executive, our Congress and our State Legislatures. Once they dared to insult our public ministers, and force into their service our generous mariners. But now, how changed the scene! They consult our

wishes; they respect our rights; they *honor* our name.

Neither is there, now, any obstruction to the progress of our holy religion, among us. The most powerful and encouraging motives to a genuine conversion to God, and a holy life of obedience, are continually spread before us.

We enjoy the exalted privileges of the Gospel, in an eminent degree. At this moment it is exerting a wonderful influence over the different relations and modifications of life. Its inestimable blessings are realized in almost every section of our blessed country. A spirit of evangelical enterprise has gone out into society, prompting christians to the performance of the most noble deeds, and preparing the way for the moral revolution of an enslaved world.

Could superstition once obscure the light of divine truth? Its clouds have been long since dispelled, by the revival of literary and religious knowledge. Could prejudice once pervert our judgment? A liberality prevails at the present day, unknown in former times. The barriers, which had long prevented a union, among the various sects of religion, are gradually giving way before the majesty of mind, that has broken from its leading strings, and, towering to its native skies, is now consecrated to the cause of 'Christ and

the church.' Could persecution once alarm our fears? We now hear no hierarchial prohibitions thundering from the papal throne. The faggots of bigotry have never gleamed upon our shores;—its martyrs never bled upon our sod. No inquisitorial familiars infest our cities, watch our private retreats and pounce upon our domestic retirements, like the blood thirsty, midnight assassin. Nor do myriads of hellish harpies, clad in the robes of sanctity, gnaw, like the never-dying worm, upon our vitals. Protected by good and wholesome laws, we may follow the dictates of our consciences, and worship him alone, who is our Father, our Deliverer, our God!

Truth is our shield, its beacon our guide, its bosom our home, and its plaudit our reward.

#### YET IN OURSELVES WE ARE WEAK.

Our nation, with her unbounded territories, amazing advantages, and vast resources, must eventually fall from her high estate, should she become forgetful of him in whom alone is everlasting strength. Our proud bulwarks, strong towers, and numerous fortresses cannot guarantee our safety, secure to us our national blessings, or perpetuate our sacred liberties, if the God of battles, the captain of the host of heaven, turns his arms against us—if he withdraws his chariots and horsemen,

and plucks up the walls of brass which he hath raised about us—if he inscribes upon our temples—the glory is departed—and thunders from his superb palace the dreadful sentence—let us go hence—they are joined to their idols; then the bold monarch of the feathered world would soon falter in his towering flight, and descend with trembling pinions; his enemy would snatch the arrows from his talons, and dash to atoms the diadem of his glory.

Let us now inquire, are we, as a people, grateful to him who led us triumphantly through all our oppressions, preserved our fathers from the tomahawk of the savage, made us victorious in battle, and secured a glorious independence for our country?

Do we generally emulate the example of our pious fathers? Do we regard as we ought the precepts of our revered Washington? Let the conscience of every man answer. Why is intemperance permitted to stalk abroad in the open face of day? Why, in many places, are the Sabbaths of the Lord profaned, his sanctuary deserted, the special operation of his Holy Spirit sneered at, and his Gospel denied, explained away, and despised? Why so much apathy, so little of the soul and spirit of piety in the duties and enjoyments of this day? Why have we yet so many citizens as much distinguished for

gaming and debauchery, as for talents and influence in society? Why is our native soil continually satiated with the blood of her sons, shed by the hand of *fashionable murderers*, in violation of all moral obligation? And why are these enormities so generally regarded either with indifference, or with approbation and applause.

In view of these things, let us consider, that it is as true of nations as individuals, that sin, in its very nature, tends to temporal and eternal ruin; and that the more nations are exalted in point of privilege, the more aggravated their sin, and the more signal will be their punishment. How striking the parallel between the Jewish nation and our own, in respect to origin, progress and distinguished privileges and blessings. God grant that the parallel may extend no further!

It is perfectly obvious, from reason, scripture and observation, that one thing, and that *one only*, can effectually stop the torrent of our national sin, which is wafting us, as it has done other nations, down into the vortex of destruction—and that is the prevalence of the pure and undefiled religion of the Lord Jesus Christ. This will render us invincible, when other resources are of no avail. The spirit of pure benevolence and christian zeal, glowing upon our altars, and breathing through our land, will chase the demon of de-

struction from our shores, and give health, activity and vigor to our constitution and laws. And, while the destroying angel marches in terror beyond the waters of the Atlantic, bowing the necks of proud monarchs, driving the ploughshare of ruin through their enslaved dominions, and shaking the foundations of the eastern hemisphere, America will be seen coming up out of the wilderness, terrible as an army with banners, travelling in the greatness of the strength of the Lord of Hosts, going forward in her honorable career, from conquering to conquer.

It becomes us, then, as cordial christians, as true lovers of our country, to arouse from our sloth, in the best of all causes—the cause of Zion. We have not a moment to lose. Our country is in danger; our all is at stake! Come, my people, saith the Lord, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: Hide thyself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For behold! the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity.

Let us unite our fervent prayers at the throne of grace, for a special out-pouring of the Holy Spirit, throughout our land, as the only effectual agent in the work of *national repentance* and *reformation*—in the preservation of our civil and religious liberties—in the consecration of this *western world* as a vast

theatre of *millennial* piety and happiness--  
and in raising up millions and millions of our  
fallen race, from the depths of sin and mis-  
ery, to the realms of eternal *peace*, and *purity*,  
and *glory*.





Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.—Acts, xiii. 41.

The work here spoken of is the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ. This glorious work originated in the benevolent purpose of the divine mind; it was made known immediately after the apostacy of our first parents. In the fulness of time, a Saviour was to appear, in the nature of man, and become a propitiation for the sins of the whole world, and open a way for our restoration and recovery from the ruins of the fall. This is properly the work of God, because he is the cause of it, constantly presides over it, and will effect its final consummation. It is true, he sees fit, in infinite wisdom, to employ human instrumentality in this great work; yet it is God that worketh in them, to will, and to do, of his good pleasure. As la-

borers in the vineyard of the Lord, we dig, we plant, we sow, we water—but it is God only who giveth the increase. By this work, then, we understand the change of the carnal mind of man, his restoration to the moral image of his holy Creator, and his preparation for the eternal enjoyment of God's presence and favor.

As a special mean of advancing and completing this glorious work, God has established a church upon earth, against which the gates of hell can never prevail. There was a signal exhibition of the power and grace of God in the advancement of this work on the day of Pentecost, when three thousand were cut to the heart by the preaching of ignorant and illiterate men.

Then the prediction of the prophet Joel—In the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my spirit upon all flesh—received its accomplishment, and the first spring was given to the renovating movements of christianity among the heathen.

Since that memorable era, this great work has been progressing; it will increase and spread, until the knowledge of the Lord shall have enlightened the whole earth. This work shall triumph over all opposition, until Christ's name becomes great among the Gentiles; until every nation, tribe and peo-

ple, under heaven, unite to render him universal homage.

*In what manner, and by what means, is this great work conducted?* Not after the manner of men, nor in accordance with their finite views; but after the wisdom of God, whose prerogative it is to conduct it in that manner and by those means which will best conduce to his own glory, and the good of his intelligent universe. He first convinces the creature of his sin—then humbles him under a rational sense of its guilt and malignant nature, that he may pardon, sanctify and exalt him far above his original purity and elevation. It is this that bewilders the proud, the haughty, and the learned, who imagine, because they are unacquainted with the secret springs that move, and the wisdom that conducts this work, that these things cannot be, or are the creations of a heated imagination, the offspring of priestcraft and fanaticism. But,

“ God moves in a mysterious way,  
His wonders to perform.”

All instruments and all means are in his power, and he uses a great variety, such as he pleases, in carrying on his work of redemption. He sends by whom he will send, and often chooses the most unlikely instru-

ments to perform the noblest services, and to accomplish the most arduous undertakings. He hath put the treasure of his Gospel in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of man—that no flesh may glory in his presence.

*The despisers of this work.* The whole body of the Jewish nation did really pour scorn and contempt upon the blessed Jesus, and on the objects of his mission. Witness the manner in which they received the notice of his birth. They contemned his labors, disputed his miracles, abused his person, and took away his life. They were especially enraged at the success of his immediate followers; and with the most barbarous severity, they opposed every effort to promulgate the doctrines of the Gospel, and promote the work of God. Nor are the Jews the only persons who despise this work.

*All backsliders* show by their conduct that they despise both Christ and his Gospel. Though once they appeared to be firmly established in the principles of christianity, and by a well ordered life and conversation, exhibited evidence to all of their piety and attachment to the cause of the Redeemer: yet, alas! they are now turned to the beggarly elements of this world, having made shipwreck of faith, and of a good conscience. They have trodden under foot the Son of God, and have counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith they were

sanctified, an unholy thing, and have done despite unto the spirit of his grace. These are spots in our feasts of charity; clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.

All profane persons, such as blasphemers, profane swearers, gamesters, drunkards, duellists, Sabbath-breakers, are virulent and active despisers of this work. It is unnecessary to prove this assertion. These characters constantly carry the proofs of their opposition about with them, and commonly glory in their shame.

All professed infidels are open despisers of the Gospel of Christ. They ridicule revelation, sport themselves at the operations of the Holy Spirit, and laugh at all whom they consider weak enough to believe in the genuineness and veracity of the Bible, and employ their blasphemous wits to burlesque its sacred contents. They not only laugh at christians, but they affect to pity their weakness, and lament the feebleness of their intellect, as if their own foolish systems, unsupported by evidence, and in direct opposition to the best testimony, were worthy the assent of a wise man, or suitable to be chosen as the foundation of his

hope for eternity. They habitually speak of christians, especially the zealous sort, as weak and ignorant. *Well, be it so.* Disturb us not in the enjoyment of *such a blessed weakness.* It has opened to us a constant communion with our God; afforded us a sense of pardon, peace and acceptance with him; has disarmed death of its terrors, and given us an earnest of eternal felicity beyond the grave. But, there is a consideration, which is calculated to have more weight with infidels than the present happiness and immortal hopes of the christian faith. Though christians are said to be weak and ignorant, they are found in some respectable company, even in this world. Locke anatomized the human mind, and accurately described its various powers and operations. Boyle explored the secret springs of nature, and developed the causes of many of its phenomena. Newton traversed the starry regions, measured the heavenly bodies, and ascertained their relative magnitudes, distances, and periodical revolutions. These are names which stand first on the page of literary fame. Around their monuments is wreathed the everduring laurel. Were these men imbecile? were their faculties of a pigmy growth? in one word, were they infidels? No; verily, they were christians. It was the religion of the Bible that blessed them in the decline of life, afforded

them more sublime enjoyments than wealth, honor or renown can give, shed its sacred beams around them in the hour of their dissolution, and cheered them quite through the dark valley of the shadow of death.

We have the authority of scripture for adding, that all men, who are not really engaged in promoting the work of the Lord, are despisers of this work. Indeed, it is utterly impossible to maintain neutral ground respecting the religion of Jesus. No man can serve two masters, says our blessed Lord, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad. It is true that many, acting entirely from self interested motives, are instrumental of advancing the cause of the Redeemer, and would not openly oppose it. Others suppress their internal feelings towards this cause, for the sake of gaining an advantage over the people of God; were it not so, christians would not long be permitted to worship God under their own vine and fig tree, none daring to make them afraid. But all, who are not cordially attached to this work from a supreme regard to its author, are cordially, though perhaps secretly, its despisers.

*The true causes of this contempt.* Such is the natural ignorance and moral darkness of men's minds, that, while in their natural state, they are incapable of discerning the truth, beauty, and spirituality of the law of God.



They are blinded by the god of this world—the allurements of time and sense—the pleasures, the vanities, the follies of the world, which contribute to darken their mental vision, and call off their attention from the concerns of their souls. The unrenewed man loves these pleasures; they are exactly suited to his corrupt and vitiated taste. It is therefore, perfectly natural for men to despise and reject divine revelation, because it expressly prohibits their habitual abuse of the things of this world, and condemns sin itself, no matter what form it assumes, or what imposing character it supports, on pain of eternal punishment.

Pride holds a high rank among the many causes of this contempt. Pride is firmly seated in the natural heart of man, and powerfully opposes every thing that threatens its dethronement. Pride is that self-exalting principle which reigns triumphant in the carnal mind, and demands universal homage. This pride cannot bear the humbling doctrines of the Gospel; they are too self-abasing; it will not stoop; it will not descend from its Babel tower, and receive pardon solely on the ground of the atoning merit of a crucified Saviour. This is the detested point of degradation. This is the offence of the cross. Here the Jews stumbled, and fell, and were broken to pieces. Here the Greeks were confounded,

bewildered, and lost. Here the infidel scoffs and sneers, and embraces his own destruction; and here the incorrigible sinner gazes, and wonders, and at last, eternally perishes!

Such are the rooted and deeply grounded prejudices of men's minds, that they will not believe, though one rose from the dead. The Jews with the most irrefragable evidence before their eyes, remained unconcerned, filled with prejudices, and in the face of the most direct and luminous displays of divine power, rejected the Son of God, and crucified the Prince of life and glory. And, at the present day, let the truth as it is in Jesus be declared, with the argumentative powers of a Paul, and with the eloquence of an Apollos, supported in every word by the high authority of divine revelation, yet despisers would still remain hardened; would continue to mock and sport themselves with their own deceivings. They would harden their hearts, and fortify their minds, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of the invisible God, should shine into their minds, and they should be converted.

*The consequences of despising this work of the Lord.* They will be fatal. Despisers shall wonder, and then, perish---perish in this life, in the hour of death, in the day of eternity.

They shall perish in this life. The Jews

afford the most striking proof, if proof were necessary, of the truth of these awful predictions uttered against them; they despised Christ, and have ever since been despised themselves. The words of our Lord have been literally fulfilled respecting them, in the most exemplary manner. Not a jot nor a tittle of his predictions have failed. They have been scattered over the face of the earth, and still wander like wretched outcasts on the footstool of God. When the Roman soldiers entered and sacked their city, and set fire to their temple, they wondered, and perished.

The expectations, which despisers, of all classes indulge from the fleeting objects of their idolatrous pursuits, are continually disappointing them :

“ They grasp the phantoms and they find them air.”

Thousands fall into gross immoralities, which destroy their health, their prosperity, their all. The old age of despisers is dreary and comfortless. Nothing is then left them but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

Despisers will wonder and perish at a dying hour. They may live without fear, continue for years careless and impenitent; but when the minister of death arrives—when the fearful summons sounds in their ears, prepare to meet thy God far other subjects, than the

trifles of time will occupy their attention. They now feel it is a fearful thing to die unprepared. They wonder why they have lived so regardless of their God; so neglectful of their immortal souls. They can say, O, the *pain*, but not the *bliss* of dying! Where am I going, says the affrighted soul? to what unknown regions?—Eternity is the only answer. Into whose presence? Into the presence of God Almighty, the Searcher of all hearts, the God of inflexible justice. Alas! I am going; but I dare not appear before him. I have sold myself for nought, I have robbed myself of a crown of inestimable value. O time! time! it is fit thou shouldst strike thy murderer to the heart. How art thou fled forever! O, for a month, a week, a single day! My frantic soul clings to earth; but in vain—the world recedes—I am shivering on the brink of eternal ruin—I sink—I die—I perish forever!

Despisers will wonder and perish at the last day. When they see the Judge enthroned, and the dead small and great stand before God; when they see the righteous applauded, and their own proud, selfish and obdurate hearts laid open, and their crimes made known; then will their false hopes all vanish—then will their fear come as desolation, and their destruction as a whirlwind. Distress and anguish shall come upon them, and all the

stings and horrors of a guilty conscience shall attend them forever and ever.

This subject exhibits, in a strong light, the infatuation of all who, in this land of light and freedom, know not God and despise his work of grace. To all persons of this description, we would say, in the language and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ—except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. *Perish*, some of you, arrested by death in the midst of revelry and dissipation, others in the full pursuit of wealth and fame—*perish* out of pious families, under the daily reproof of parental example, at the very threshold of God's temple, from under the droppings of his sanctuary, and the presence of a faithful heart searching ministry—*perish* amidst the full blaze of Gospel light, and Gospel love—*perish*, although exalted to the gates of heaven in point of privilege, in full view of the mansions of the redeemed—thrust down into the dark regions of eternal despair.

“ Peace on earth, good will to man.”

It is said that just before the battle of the pyramids, Napoleon sublimely remarked to his soldiers—‘Forty centuries are looking down upon you this day from the tops of the pyramids.’ On the anniversary of the advent morning, with the song of the advent angels on our tongues, it is for us to say to each other as christian soldiers—Eighteen centuries are looking down upon us from the top of Calvary.

We not only have the ancient records, and the early examples of christianity, but we have before us, spread like a map, its course and current for eighteen hundred years. To the durability of the christian virtues, time, which wears away the solid marble, has lent the sanction of its power. Imperial Rome, whose capacious empire on the morning that Jesus was born embraced the wide world, has crum-

bled before the remorseless tooth of the hungry years: Ancient Rome is now but dust—yet Christianity lives—lives forever in our souls to the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is not by a splendid eulogium on the spirit which breathes out from the words of the text that we shall worthily celebrate this day. I purpose a wider range—a holier theme. I shall scarcely pause to point towards the troubled continent of Europe, where tyranny, like some sinuous monster, has so firmly bound the nations in its snaky folds that their disenfranchisement can be effected only by a dreadful disruption, a sea of blood. Turning away from Paris, whence the cloud of battle has just rolled up, I shall scarcely direct your eyes to Belgium bleeding at every pore—the streets of her Brussels swept with the red artillery of war—and her smoking Antwerp a ruinous pile that testifies to heaven against kingly rapine and murder. However important the present era in the dispensation of Providence may be, there is to us, individually and collectively, a consideration of more importance than anything in the movements of empires. The question to us this morning is, *What is Christianity?* What is the spirit of that great era which was introduced by angelic strains, breathed gloriously, by celestial harpers, along the lighted up midnight sky, to the words of solemn joy; Glory to God in the

Highest! Peace on earth, good will to men?

The words of our text are not so much descriptive of the first principles of Christianity as of its effects in promoting the glory of God and the happiness of man. Here we should make a critical distinction: the result is one thing, and the long train of principles or causes leading to that result may be very different. Yea, we have Christ's own declaration that his coming to our earth on his grand mission of love would arm mankind in bloody struggles against each other, would disunite families, and create us foes in our own households ---not on account, indeed, of any defect in the gospel of heavenly peace, but the deadly opposition is roused by its keen reproofs of sin, its purity, and its stern questionings into the motives and deep purposes of the human heart.

Be ours the pleasant task this advent morning of learning from the sacred scriptures what was the religion of the early christians---what those, who had seen the Lord Jesus, face to face, considered the distinguishing traits of christian character; and then a second task, pleasant or unpleasant, according to the tenor of our lives, will remain for us in comparing our own Christianity with that of the earliest period of the new dispensation. May the Lord smile upon us and grant his blessing as we recal the thoughts, repeat the words and examine the lives of the primitive disciples, who had



the privilege of seeing our blessed Jesus in his earthly estate. More blessed than they shall we be, who, not having seen his mortal form, yet believe on him to the saving of our souls!

From the multiform manifestations of christian character and disposition, I shall only select five general points of view, each one sustained by the word of God, and casting light around the evidences of primitive discipleship.

#### THEIR DISPOSITIONS OF HEART TOWARDS GOD AND CHRIST.

There was a time in the religious experience of the ancient Christians, when they were under deep impressions of their sinfulness and danger. The glorious change from darkness to light, was with them, no illusion: it was a change in the heart and in the will, producing an affectionate reliance on Christ for salvation. Towards God it produced a holy fear and the elevating affections of love, hope, joy, and thankfulness.

Every one of these particulars of ancient christian disposition are fully established by the following passages of scripture: Now when they heard this, they were pricked in the heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, men and brethren, what shall we do? Saul, trembling with astonishment, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? The jailer called for a light, and sprang in, and

came trembling and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, sirs, what must I do to be saved? Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God. Even when we were dead in trespasses and sins hath he quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you since we heard of your faith and of the love which ye have to all the saints. Remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you. Then had the churches rest—walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied—and Hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts.

Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.—And not only so, but we also joy in God. Praising God, and having favor with all the people.

The numerous emphatic expressions in the foregoing citations speak with an angel's voice of the affections of heart which the ancient disciples cherished towards their Creator and Redeemer.

#### THEIR ATTENTION TO THE ORDINANCES.

The great gospel itself they received with joy and reverence—they were baptized—they often read the Holy Scriptures—they commemorated the dying of their ascended Lord at the sacramental table—they were often found on their knees in social prayer, in secret prayer; in the delightful employment of public worship they were found late at night and early in the morning—and, unlike those of any other religion under heaven, they prayed for their enemies.

I establish every one of those traits of ancient discipleship by a second appeal to the early writings of the church:—Then they that gladly received his word were baptized—and the same day there were added to them about three thousand souls. Crispes, the chief ruler of the Synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corin-

thians hearing, believed and were baptized. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all gladness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily whether these things were so. When ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men. Continuing daily in the temple, with one accord, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart. Peter went up upon the house top to pray, about the sixth hour. At midnight, Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God, and the prisoners heard them. And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow, and continued his speech until midnight. Stephen cried with a loud voice, lay not this sin to their charge.

#### THEIR TEMPER AND CONDUCT IN SOCIETY.

The leading particulars of their temper and conduct towards others may be classed under the general heads of great esteem, care and love for their ministers, and an abundant reciprocity in return; unbounded affection to all the brethren; charity and kindness to those in want; unanimity of heart in promoting the temporal and spiritual good of those around them; diligence in spreading the glo-

rious news of salvation from the upper waters of the Nile to the lonely Island of Britain—united wit a wide separation of interests from the wicked.

For proofs I again appeal to the unerring word:—My temptation which was in my flesh, ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. Peter was kept in prison, but prayer was made without ceasing of the Church for him. Oh, ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you; our heart is enlarged. But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you, for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea. The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul; neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common; neither was there any among them that lacked. But I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner.

#### THEIR PERSONAL VIRTUES.

Their deportment was sober; they were humble in view of their own sinfulness; they

were patient and even joyful under afflictions; they were willing to die; they were full of happiness in the prospect of eternity.

The following passages are only a few of those that describe the sterling virtues of the ancient saints; wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot. Unto me who am the least of all saints is this grace given that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief. So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God, for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure—For ye had compassion on me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. But we glory in tribulation also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ; which is far better. Oh, death where is thy sting? Oh grave where is thy victory?

#### THEIR SUFFERINGS FOR CHRIST'S SAKE.

Their sufferings have no parallel in the annals of human misery—The founders of no other doctrine encountered persecution like theirs. Reviled and hunted from kingdom to

kingdom, they wandered amidst the mountains of Judea, Greece or Italy, clothed in the skins of beasts that were more merciful to them than their savage persecutors. Violent deaths were the early rewards of all the apostles. It was in those murderous times an act of great self-denial to profess the name of Christ before men. Yes, the primitive christians suffered. Hear the relation which a few of them gave of their trials:—when they had called the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus. Cast one out of the city and stoned him. They stoned Stephen, calling upon God and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. At that time there was a great persecution against the church, and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria. Herod killed James the brother of John, with the sword. The Jews stirred up the devout and honorable woman and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts. When they had laid many stripes upon Paul and Silas, they cast them into prison.

These numerous elucidations of ancient christian character cannot but give us the form and body of christianity. This was religion. This was the church arrayed for the battle. This was the glorious bride which angels welcomed to the New Jerusalem. This

was the heavenly spirit of Jesus, embodied in the hearts of his faithful, confiding followers. This was the sunlike form before which the moral glooms that hung over the whole world, like a black eternity, were to roll away, and admit immortal splendor from above. This was the perfect form of spiritual beauty, rising like a vision of heaven upon a world of sin. It was the new creation which filled satan with astonishment and dismay. He saw the Lion of the tribe of Judah wrench unharmed the death arrow of hellish malice from his opened side, and with tremendous power unclasp the sealed book which held beneath its adamant lock the fates of earth's hitherto hopeless millions. He saw, and fell like lightning from heaven. Hell echoed back to the far earth his yell of despair. The sun hid his face. The crazy rocks and mountains shuddered with the spasms of an internal earthquake. The dead, untimely, opened their glazing eyes upon a scene they could not comprehend, nor take into the rayless sockets of those windows of the soul long darkened by death.

My dear hearers! is this religion yours? Have you the witness in your bosoms that you stand on the foundation of the apostles and first christians? Have you, like them, felt your sinfulness and danger without Christ in a world that was passing away from you like



an arrow shot out into thin air? Have you, like them, fled to him, as Peter on the troubled sea, saying, save, Lord, or we perish? Did a light break out in the heavens above you in the moment of your extremity? Did the tempest of your soul assuage—the loud billows of divine wrath hush up their roarings before the rebuke of Him whom winds and waves and worlds obey? Did the calm morning of heavenly peace shine into your hearts with a sweet power, before which the thick darkness of your souls fled away? And when your joys flowed like a wide and deep river, was Christ your theme and your all? Did you find him precious to your souls as the loved light of your own existence? Did you believe him able to guide you, like a strong angel, through the vicissitudes of time, through sickness and pain and the chilling darkness of the grave to your final home, where the shadowy, lean, and shapeless form of death shall never enter? Did you, who once despised the terrors of the Lord, begin to have a holy fear creep through your frames at remembrance of the Ineffable One—love and hope mount up in your bosoms in view of the perfections of Eternal Benevolence? Did you rejoice in God more than in the abundance of wealth, or did you find yourselves at peace with the great monarch of eternity, or did a song of thankfulness

break from your fervent lips when the honor of God was precious to redeemed thousands?

Have you observed the ordinances of Christ's gracious appointment? Have you met your beloved Lord at the table which he has spread until the world shall end on which to lay out the memorials of his dying love? Have you delighted to read the scriptures as if they were bequests from an earthly relative, conveying more than the wealth of the Indies to you and yours forever? Have you, like your ascended and now glorified Saviour, spent the night in secret prayer, wrestling in inexpressible desires with Him who never slumbers on the high watch tower of universal rule? Have you, like your Saviour, prayed fervently for those whose deep, causeless malice would take away your lives? Have you loved, esteemed, and prayed for those whom the Holy Spirit hath placed over you in the ministry of reconciliation? Have you taken upon you the full burden of their wants? Have you stepped forward to defend them when assailed by malicious tongues? Have you from the impulses of christian love to your brethren relieved them when in want---covered their faults with the mantle of charity---shut up your ears against defamatory reports respecting the conduct or principles of those of whom the world is not worthy? Have you, when assembled in congregation to promote reli-

gious efforts acted with one mind---the unity of one with the strength of thousands? Have your hearts and ears been open to the calls of the heathen world, who are absolutely starving by millions for the crumbs of spiritual knowledge which are thrown away in christian lands? Have you said in your hearts of the wicked who are in worldly prosperity, come not, oh my soul, into their tabernacle, and to them let not mine honor be united? Have you been sober in your deportment as though all the eyes of immortality were looking out from every cloud and star upon you, and the never sleeping eye of the Watchman of Israel? Have you been humble like those who have entailed woe and disobedience upon themselves and owe all they have to mercy, unspeakable mercy? When afflictions gathered around you, overshadowing all your worldly prospects, have you been patient under the heavy hand of bereavement, and blessed the Lord who took far away, into the darkness of the grave, your beloved friend? When fever and sickness left their imperious messages for your own selves, and summoned you in seeming haste to leave the scenes of time, were you willing to go alone the dreary journey from whence no traveller returns; or when eternity was apparently near, were you filled with joy that your sure reward was so nigh---your crown of everlasting life so close

to your mortal brows? Have you gladly seen your worldly expectations fade for Christ's sake? Have you, without a wish to follow them, seen your gay and pleasure loving friends, take another path from that in which you chose to walk---and have you joyfully borne reproach, calumny, and angry words on account of your faithfulness to the cause of the Redeemer?

If the sincere answer to all these questions is in the affirmative, you are indeed christians; you have a Christmas blessing which worlds sold to purchase could not buy, nor hell, roused up to fury, destroy.

Contemplating this subject a threefold figure of unparalleled grandeur arises on the mind. It is a view of Time and Eternity and Religion. Time hath a swift motion like one in haste to be gone. It had a beginning and must soon end. Detached portions of it are passing away like the torn clouds before a driving hurricane. Since the last anniversary of this blessed day, a year has gone to join 'the years beyond the flood;' and the whole extent of time, through thousands of years, is but the length of a fragment broken off from eternity. Eternity! oh, who shall describe it? Who hath returned from its echoless shores to tell its secrets! One writer remarks that when the hour shall be inquired by those who are suffering the eternal

penalty for despising the blood of a Saviour, the only answer will be that of a solemn voice, pronouncing along the bosom of their darkness the indescribable answer—eternity, eternity, eternity!

Connected with both time and eternity, Religion throws her radiance over two worlds. Alas, alas, there is one world where she never comes; there is one world unvisited by Hope's bright star. Religion stands on the banks of the swift rolling river which sweeps empires and thrones and cities and men to their final, changeless destinations.

In a world where universal 'glory to God in the Highest' shall be the universal anthem, it will not be a cause of grief to us that, departing from the usual strain of christian triumph and gratulation on this occasion, we have walked up towards Calvary, from whence the stream of salvation, destined to roll through and overflow the nations who rise under the gospel dispensation, gushes out as from an unclosed fountain. We saw mists and fogs and clouds and storms lour around the river of life—yet it borrowed no gloom or sadness—neither did it roll one turbid wave to soil the lowly, but lovely flowers that delighted to linger on its peaceful banks. If the atmosphere now around us be brighter—if the stream of salvation be broader—if the bow of

the eternal promises, one end resting on earth and the other planted on one of the sapphire stones of the New Jerusalem, be painted with livelier colors on the dark, retreating vapors of the storm—if signs in the heavens and commotions among the nations give token of a second advent, when Christ shall descend in a chariot of cloud, as he went up on the ascension morning from Olivet—if eighteen centuries looking down upon us from the top of Calvary, and the unborn centuries looking up to us for the body and fashioning of times to come---confer any importance and honor and glory to the high station and dignity with which Heaven has invested the present generation---to God be all the praise--to us the boundless joy.



1 TIM. i. 15.

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

*Jesus Christ came into the world.* From that hour, when the promise of a Saviour broke the fearful gloom that had spread its dark curtains over paradise, down to the auspicious moment when celestial choirs poured upon the ears of wondering shepherds the new and ravishing song of deliverance and peace, the world had been gradually preparing for his appearance. The children of men, those more especially to whom appertained the covenant and promise, were taught to expect some great personage, clothed with divine authority and unlimited power. At length, in the fulness of time, after a variety of strange phenomena, operating alike on the heathen and Jewish world, presenting signal omens, portentous and overwhelming, the star of the promised Prince ushered in his glorious reign, and Christ



was worshipped by the Eastern magi, while yet an infant, under the significant title of King of the Jews. The coming of the Messiah had been described by saint and seer, patriarch and king, with the pomp of oratory, and the eloquence of song. The circumstance and stateliness of kingly dominion and magnificent display, portrayed in the Jewish writings, tended to give importance and grandeur to his expected appearance and reign. But notwithstanding the picture was highly colored, the outline vast and imposing, it was not to be understood literally. The glory and the beauty, the magnitude and the display, were to be spiritually discerned; and therefore, none but spiritual minds could comprehend the connexion between the lowliness of the Redeemer's person and appearance, and the lofty annunciations of the prophet's harp. The Jews were wholly absorbed in the letter, and they were thus unprepared or unwilling to pierce the veil of flesh, and poverty of circumstance, which flung a cloud over the ascending Sun. The prophet sang in vain, 'Rejoice greatly, oh daughter of Zion! shout, oh daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King cometh unto thee!' The Jews believed the record, but they rejoiced not in the coming of Christ. The daughters of Jerusalem shouted not at the birth of their King. But though they gave no welcome to their long expected one,

dazzling squadrons from the high empyrean, were not unmindful of the great event. If man sang no glad song, turned no golden lyre, multitudes of the heavenly host hymned his praise, and celebrated his birth in lofty strains of angelic music.

‘ In heaven, the rapturous song began,  
And sweet, seraphic fire  
Through all the shining regions ran,  
And strung, and tuned the lyre.’

And though no light flashed from the earth, ‘to bid the brightest and best of the morning’ welcome to our sin-stained soil, a new and brilliant star glittered in the dome of heaven, the precursor of his glorious reign.

He was the brightness of his Father’s glory, and the express image of his person ; yet, Hear, oh heaven! and be astonished, oh earth!’ he became man! He was in the form of God, and counted it not robbery to be equal with God ; yet, he descended from his royal throne, clothed himself with the dust of his footstool, and became bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh ! In the ignoble garb of a servant of servants, he entered the sinful and troubled abodes of mortality, to be our partner in suffering and sorrow, that he might be deeply imbued with the finest sensitive feelings of poor human nature.

‘Touch’d with a sympathy within,  
He knows our feeble frame;

He knows what sore temptations mean,  
For he hath felt the same.'

He came to his own, and his own received him not. He was despised and rejected by the very beings, for whose salvation and happiness he had left the glory he had with the Father before the world was, and from whom he had a right to expect the most profound reverence, and demonstrations of the highest joy. No sooner was it noised abroad that the Christ was born in Bethlehem, according to the prophets, than Herod was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. A base and bloody order was issued by the pusillanimous monarch, who felt conscious of the insecurity of his throne, and trembled, lest the new born Prince was destined to wrench the sceptre from his impious grasp. Nor did their malicious and blood-thirsty designs against his person, his character, and ministry, abate, till the insulting, barbarous, and tragic scenes of the garden, the judgment hall, the pillar, and the cross, consummated their diabolical purposes.

*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.*—Man is guilty, weighed down under the curse of a law he has wilfully and wickedly broken. Having thus ruined himself, he is unable to meet the perfect obedience required by the divine statute, and has thus sunk into deep and irremediable condemnation, ex-

posed to wrath and punishment, without any dawning of hope, or any intercessions of mercy. In this sense, men are sinners—all men. There is no exception; for in Adam all die. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. The whole world lieth in wickedness. There is none that doeth righteousness, no, not one.

Man is unholy. Unholiness is guilt. The unholy and sinful dispositions of the human heart, are exhibited in the pages of man's history, with more or less enormity; but they have invariably the same crimson tye from Adam down to the present hour. This truth is established in every stage of his brief existence, in every country, and through all orders and grades of society. The whole family of man, being thus tainted with this great moral pollution, are thus separated from all friendly intercourse or communion with the pure Being against whom they have rebelled, and whose government and laws they have slighted and trampled under foot. This separation from God deepens the pit into which they are plunged, rendering their case hopeless in this life, exposing them to the thunderbolts of the next, and to the eternal horrors of a terrible and irrevocable perdition.

‘How sad our state by nature is!  
Our sin how deep its stains!’

To save man from his sins and to shield him

from the impending ruin that thundered on his path, the Lord Jesus came into the world. 'He shall save his people from their sins,' is the signification of his name. His own words confirm this truth, 'the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost.' 'I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.' This benevolent and godlike purpose engaged his attention during the whole course of his ministry and life, nor did his sufferings, or the cruelties he endured, even in their extreme and bitterest agonies, absorb this great leading feature of his character.

The manner in which he accomplished this great design, and prepared the way for the sinner's recovery, salvation, and happiness, is in perfect accordance with the claims of justice and the criminality of the offender. Man is guilty before God, condemned, and awaiting the sentence of death, unable to yield a perfect obedience to the divine precept; without hope, having no plea, and totally ruined and undone. In this trying juncture, Christ offers himself as his substitute, places himself at the bar of justice, receives the blow intended for the criminal, obeys the law in all its minutiae and extent, satisfying its most rigorous demands, and making it possible for the guilty and condemned wretch to be released from the bondage of sin, restored to the Divine favor and image; at the same time, guarding

every infringement upon the justice of the lawgiver, so that God can now be just, and the justifier of all them who sincerely repent and unfeignedly believe in his Son Jesus Christ, the slain Lamb, who is the propitiation for our sins, and not ours only, but for the sins of the whole world. There is no remission of sins without the shedding of blood.

‘To man, the bleeding cross has promised all:  
The bleeding cross has sworn eternal grace.’

See the consummation of the promise given to Adam in the hour of his depression, and in the night of his guilt, in the sufferings and death of Jesus! Behold the foot of the promised seed bruising the head of the great serpent, and from the bloody brow of Calvary triumphing over principalities and powers, and making a show of them openly, strewing their honors in the dust, and withering the strength of the mighty and the renowned! Behold the Son of the eternal God, clothed in the robes of his priesthood, dyed with the blood of the grape, alone and single-handed, treading the wine press of the wrath of God! See him coming out of Bozrah, travelling in the greatness of his strength, crushing down the walls of our prison house, entering the lists with all our enemies, disarming death of its terrors, the grave of its boasted triumphs, bursting the barriers of the tomb, and binding, with

the golden chain of his atonement, earth to heaven, man to God; lifting the everlasting gates, and pointing far, far away, up into the highest heavens, to the mansions of everlasting blessedness and peace, prepared for the faithful from the foundation of the world.

Who is the King of glory, who?  
 The Lord that all our foes o'ercame,  
 The world, and sin, and hell o'erthrew;  
 And Jesus is the conqueror's name.

The terms of salvation, are few and simple, and accord well with the plan of redemption and the character of the atonement made by Jesus Christ. Repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, are the conditions prescribed in the gospel. Our repentance should be deep, sincere, and lasting; our faith of the operation of the Spirit, for faith is the gift of God. It should be fixed singly on God, through Jesus Christ, the great Mediator between God and man, without any reliance upon ourselves, or our own righteousness; for by the deeds of the law no man can be justified in the sight of God. He must therefore turn away from Sinai, and from self, from every part of heaven, from all hope and every plea, but, God be merciful to me a sinner.

'None but Jesus  
 Can do helpless sinners good!'

Come to God, pleading the merits of a Savior—

‘Five bleeding wounds he bears,  
 Receiv’d on Calvary;  
 They pour effectual prayers,  
 They strongly speak for me.  
 Forgive him, oh, forgive, they cry,  
 Nor let that ransom’d sinner die!’

And mark the success of the appeal—

‘The Father hears him pray,  
 His dear anointed One;  
 He cannot turn away  
 The presence of his Son;  
 His spirit answers to the blood,  
 And tells me I am born of God.’

The salvation alluded to is not circumscribed in its operations. It does not merely imply the entire acquittal of the condemned sinner. It changes as well as justifies; working a moral reformation in the dispositions of the heart, in the conversation, and the life. It is a salvation from all sin, from the least and last remains of the carnal nature. The Bible teaches this encouraging doctrine, using the language of authority, and plainly saying, that without holiness of heart, we shall never see God. The man who believes with a heart unto righteousness, to him is the reward, not of debt, and this reward is the indwelling Spirit witnessing with his, not only that he is born again, but that he is also sanctified, set apart for God’s use, to be a vessel of honor in the spiritual church of the Lord; the very



thoughts of his heart being cleansed by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, so that he now perfectly loves God, and worthily magnifies his holy name. Are we justified? Can we set to our seal, that God for Christ's sake has pardoned our sins? If we can rejoice in the divine favor, and know in whom we have believed, let us go forward, bearing precious seed, full of faith in the promises, and relying implicitly on the assurance of God's word, and we shall feel a spiritual enlargement of soul. We shall be saved with an entire salvation from all sin, and rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. The designs of Christ's coming into the world will be answered in all their evangelical bearings. We shall no longer go mourning all our days, limiting the Almighty by our lack of faith, want of decision of character, and sinful backwardness. All the Christian graces shall distinguish our onward course, irradiating our onward path, and giving out a beautiful epitome of true religion, in the conformity of our lives to the precepts of the gospel.

We may go farther onward and still find, as we progress, that immortal blessings spring up in consequence of Christ's coming, beyond the precincts of time. Christ came in to our world, that we might go into a better world. Christians have no expectation of reaping all the benefits of Christ's coming, in this world;

here they expect to taste of his salvation; in heaven it will be all their food. Here they expect, indeed, to love much, as much has been forgiven them—here they expect to pay much, as they have many wants—here they expect to praise much, as they have eternal cause for songs and thanksgiving—here they expect to be perfect, as their Father in heaven is perfect; and here, beneath nature's sun, they do expect the sun of heavenly joy will grow broader and more brilliant, as the sands of their earthly hours decline, until its rounded and palpable disk shall seem to absorb every other prospect; but in heaven they expect not only an immeasurable flood of glory—they expect also, ever expanding capacities of mind, soul and spirit, to take in and enjoy this augmenting tide of holy delight.

In conclusion, we pause a moment over the magnitude of the event, described in the words of the text—Christ came into the world. The advent must ever rank higher in the gradations of earthly occurrences than any other. As the closing of the Jewish dispensation and the opening of the Christian era, it bears an imposing attitude; as the accomplishment of promises which had cheered the inhabitants of the earlier world—as a most magnificent display of heavenly mercy and condescension; as a death blow to the otherwise unbroken tyranny of sin and destruction; as the

last sure refuge of humanity, under its load of woes and sufferings, and as furnishing the only ark of salvation that shall be able to bear up against the earth's second deluge—that of fire—the advent has an importance which calls for admiration, and demands the loudest songs of adoring angels and redeemed men. Christ came into the world, and every ancient type and shadow submerged in the full tide of glory that rolled before him at his coming. Christ came into the world, and, for the first and only time, the far wandering music of the sweet heavens struck on mortal ears. Christ came into the world, and the star of his empire arose in lovely radiance over Bethlehem. He came and the demons of despair, with clenched hands, and blood-shot eyes, spread out their dragon wings, to return to their native hell. He came, and the realms of darkness were involved in heavier clouds, and gave out more terrific groans, as the last hopes of the thunder-blasted monarch below were quenched forever in the streams that flowed down the rocky steep of Calvary. He came, and Sinai thundered terribly and hopelessly no more—the Lion of Judah and the voice of the broken mandate, became silent to those who sprinkled themselves with the blood of this sacrifice—and the trumpet tongued song of unnumbered millions in heaven smote on prophetic ears like the sound of many waters.

How precious is Christ to every one who has received him, and knows experimentally the value of his redeeming love! In vain have the flowery epithets of the magniloquent East exhausted their perfumes on the Savior's name and perfections; his beauties are yet unspoken—undescribed. Every Christian, whether he possess the oriental order of character, or the hyperborean frigidity, knows how weak and imbecile are the loftiest powers of language to describe the chiefest among ten thousand—the one altogether lovely. Sun of the morning—the Day Spring from on high—the Beauty of holiness—Angel of the covenant—slain Lamb of God---Priest--Prophet--King---accept our poor attempts to honor thee in that world, whose crown of thorns, whose rugged wood, whose inhospitable soil were stained with thy blood, freely poured for the salvation of its guilty inhabitants.



EXODUS, XXIII. 20.

Behold, I send an angel before thee, to keep thee in the way,  
and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared.

No Christian can expect to reach heaven without opposition and difficulty. 'In the world ye shall have tribulation,' is the prophetic warning Jesus gave his disciples on the eve of their separation. It was necessary to prepare their minds for the great tribulations they were called to endure. In the primitive ages of the Christian church, the sufferings of God's people were frequent and unparalleled. Although the hand of persecution has long since been paralyzed, and the followers of Christ are not called to suffer the spoiling of their goods, or the burning of their bodies, the divine decree, that all who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution, is not repealed. For notwithstanding the fair face the world shows towards Christianity, and the many

good and wholesome laws that rear up a wall of brass around it, the heart of man is unchanged, and his carnal disposition is the same as it was in the hottest times, when persecution raged, and the tribulations of the righteous were neither few nor small. This world is a wilderness still, and to the Christian who has escaped from the city of destruction, and turned his face Zionward, it is truly formidable. He hears the frantic ravings of the coming storm on the outspread wings of the tempest. He sees the bleak mountains throwing their giant shadows athwart the path he must tread—the interminable sands, stretching away, and lost in the distance, dim his weary eye—while hordes of implacable enemies harass and wound him, as he presses onward towards the Jordan of deliverance and hope. He is, therefore, fearfully apprehensive, that he will one day make shipwreck of faith, and prove a recreant from the grace of Christ. But when he becomes acquainted with the supports and consolations of the gospel, and finds that God is not unmindful of his people, and has always opened a door for their relief—that the way to heaven, though difficult and dangerous, is rendered easy, and even pleasant, by the kindness of our Heavenly Father, his mind is relieved, and a sweet peace takes possession of his soul. The Christian thus supported and enlightened by

the Spirit of God, is calm amidst the storm. In the midst of strife, and when the battling elements rage around him, and threaten destruction to his hopes, he hears the voice of his deliverer above the storm, saying unto him, 'Go forward---fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee by the right hand of my righteousness.'

'When darkness intercepts the skies,  
And sorrow's waves around me roll,  
And high the storms of trouble rise,  
And half o'erwhelm my sinking soul;  
My soul a sudden calm shall feel,  
And hear a whisper, "Peace, be still!"

*The Christian has a faithful guide----*  
The children of Israel were not left to tread the mazes of the wilderness alone, and without a guide. God not only raised up Moses and Aaron to go before them, and to encourage them in the devious paths through which they were called to pass, but he also provided a column of smoke by day and a pillar of fire by night, to conduct them in safety in their hazardous journey to the promised Canaan. Nor is he less solicitous to provide for the Christian's journey to the heavenly Canaan. The blessed Jesus has undertaken to guide the poor pilgrim through the valley of miseries; and for that purpose, he has already travelled the road, and made himself acquainted



with all its difficulties, and windings, its sorrows and tribulations, that he may be the better able to minister to the necessities of his suffering people, and conduct them in safety to the port of endless bliss. The Holy Spirit's influence, the light of the sacred word, and the presence of the angel of the covenant, conspire to render the Christian's path plain, to secure his feet from stumbling, and to keep his face turned towards Mount Zion, the city of the living God. Thus guided, he marches forward without fear, knowing that all his ways are ordered for the best---believing in hope against hope, and resolved, through difficulty and danger, darkness, bereavement, and death, to persevere to the end; knowing that those only who endure to the end, shall be saved.

*He has a strong guard.*---In a dangerous road, a guide is necessary; but is not always sufficient. But the Christian has both a guide and a protector. 'The Lord God,' says the Psalmist, 'is a sun and shield.' 'He is both a guard and a light. The Lord fought all Israel's battles. The Lord is a man of war: The Lord is his name. Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea. Thy right hand, oh Lord, is become glorious in power: Thy right hand, oh Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy! Thou, in thy mercy, hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed:

'Thou hast guided them in thy strength to thy holy habitation. He was their Captain--and vain is the arm of might, the councils of the wise, or the rush of armed legions, without his assistance and support. The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. It is the Lord who giveth the victory. He alone can subdue our foes, and overcome the obstacles in the Christian's course. When he withhold his aid, and leaves us to ourselves, the feeblest worm is capable of destroying us, the most insignificant circumstance may work our ruin. But they who put their trust in the Lord, shall never be confounded. They shall be like Mount Zion, that cannot be moved. When the king of Assyria encompassed the Lord's prophet in Dathan, with horses and chariots, and a great host, his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do? And he answered, fear nothing; for *they* that be with *us*, are *more* than *they* that be with *them*. And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man: and he saw, and behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire, round about Elisha. The Christian's guard are numerous and mighty. They encamp around the faithful like a wall of fire. The forms of the heavenly ones, unseen indeed by mortal eyes, crowd the region of atmosphere where

we dwell. Their presence is a safe protection from dangers seen and unseen. They watch their charge continually, and never slumber nor sleep. No change of circumstances, poverty, or pain, weal, or wo, makes any change in their regards, nor lessens the deep interest and anxious solicitude they always manifest for the heirs of glory, in screening them from harm, covering their heads in every severe conflict with their spiritual foes, and preserving them alive when death and hell stalk abroad, trampling upon the haughty ones of the earth. The chivalry of heaven is the Christian's guard! He is supported by the arm of Jehovah. Though all the powers of darkness should be leagued against him, he need fear no ill---for greater is he that is for us, than all that is against us. What enemy can compete with the Almighty? or measure strength with the arm that supports a universe of worlds? What resistless tide, but he can, in a moment, roll back! What mountain billows, but he can stay! Can he not hush the wild uproar of contending elements, smooth the ruffled brow of the blackening heavens; arrest the forked lightnings in their destructive course, and change blustering winds into Zephyrs, soft as the balmy airs of Eden! All things are subservient to his will, and minister to his pleasure. And can he not engage them all in the Christian's service, to ensure

his happiness and safety, and to conduce to his present and everlasting good!

‘What though a thousand hosts engage,  
A thousand worlds my soul to shake,  
I have a shield, shall quell their rage,  
And drive the alien armies back.’

*He has rich and abundant supplies.*—Israel had nigh fainted in the wilderness for lack of bread; his soul was thirsty; but he cried unto the Lord in his trouble, and he delivered him out of his distresses, and he heard his voice. Sweet water streamed from the smitten rock, and manna dropped down fresh from the propitious skies. That rock prefigured Christ. His body was stricken, his bosom cleft, and from thence flowed the living waters that make glad the city of our God. His body is bread indeed, and his blood is drink indeed. The Lord has provided a rich and generous feast for his children. The table is large, and extends all over the earth. There is no spot on the footstool, it matters not how barren, or dreary, rocky, or uncultivated, but what is visited by the rich dews of heavenly grace, or from whose soil, does not spring up celestial fruit, pleasant to the taste, and refreshing to the soul. For the Christian’s accommodation the Lord has opened up springs in the desert, and crowned the unfruitful places of the earth with the flowers of paradise, and sweetened the very air we breathe with the spicy gales of

Calvary. All along the King's highway, cast up for the ransomed of the Lord, are the arbors and shady and beautiful groves, his hands have planted and adorned, to comfort and refresh the weary pilgrim in his toilsome journey to the desired haven. He is constantly supplied with every thing necessary and useful to satisfy his wants. Shining ones attend his footsteps---extensive prospects, ever-varying, reaching far up above the realm of clouds, glowing with the touches of a divine pencil---ravishing sounds of melody and song, with hopes immortal, that know no bound---and the recompense of reward, that no eye hath seen, nor ear hath heard, and which hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive, all these, with more than tongue can utter, or language describe, are intended for his benefit and use, to animate, encourage, and strengthen him, till he hears the trumpet of victory, exchanges the mortal coil for the wardrobe of the skies, and mingles with the church triumphant on the banks of deliverance.

*He is not travelling an unknown road.*---When the Israelites fled from the face of Pharaoh and his armed host, they were treading an unknown path. No monuments arose to their view, no voices came upon the winds to tell them that others had trodden the same way, encountered the same difficulties, triumphed over similar obstacles, and that they

might push on without faltering, having the noblest examples to stimulate them to deeds of glory and suffering. No encouragements like these, were adduced to sustain the minds of the affrighted multitude, who stood trembling between the sea of difficulty and the pursuing army. But the Christian sets his foot upon the proud wave, feeling assured that myriads have passed over in safety. He enters the wilderness unmoved; confident, that he who conducted all that had gone before, securely and triumphantly, unmaimed and untouched to the purchased possession, is able to save to the uttermost all them who humbly rely upon his promises, and commit their souls to his faithful keeping. Thanks be to God! the Christian is not like one who beats the air. He is not trying an experiment. He has the glorious example of the bravest and the best to encourage him---kings and princes, warriors and statesmen, philosophers and poets, who have entered the same course, tracked the same rough and thorny paths, have been willing to submit themselves to the same guide, borne patiently the same reproaches, endured the same tribulations; and experienced the same joys, consolations and supports, and are now quietly reposing under the shadow of the Almighty's throne.

‘They all are robed in spotless white,  
And conquering palms they bear.’—

When the Christian beholds these clouds of witnesses---when he hears the dying testimony of these illustrious persons---and reads engraven on their histories, and the monuments of their valor and faithfulness, the great fights they endured, the deep waters through which they passed, the bitter cups they were forced to drain, and the cruel mockings and scourgings to which they submitted with patient resignation and holy joy; manifesting their integrity, unsubdued, and without wavering, even in the hottest fires and in the dreadful hour of martyrdom, clapping their scourged and bloody hands with shouts of holy triumph---his very soul within him burns, and pants to emulate the integrity, the patience and Christian fortitude, for which these heroic spirits were so nobly distinguished.

*He is not a solitary traveller---*He is accompanied by multitudes from almost every country under heaven. They have neither decreased in dignity, nor in number. Their achievements, it is true, do not seem to make so much noise in the world, as did those of the fathers in the days of the church's purity and glory. But they are still conquerors through Him who hath loved us, and are nobly contending for the faith once delivered to the saints, with the world, the flesh, and the devil. The enemies of Christianity do not now assume so formidable an array as they did in

the days of the apostles and their immediate successors, when the iron hand of the law, and the united suffrages of a great people, were its sworn foes; but they are equally formidable in another point of light, and more insidious and wily, and require, perhaps more skill and judgment to encounter them with any hope of success. When the faggots are heaped, the fires burning, and men's lives are in danger; extraordinary gifts, deep religious feeling, with brave contempt of death are elicited, not often seen when the church is permitted to worship without fear, under her own vine and fig-tree. There are, however, instances of piety, zeal, and self-devotion to the cause of the Redeemer, among Christians at the present time, in fine keeping with the giants of Trajan's and Julian's days. These are the companions of the Christian, whose sentiments are elevated and whose conversation is in heaven. They are not of this world; for they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. They are bending their steps to the country for which he is bound, are partakers of the same like precious faith, and contend manfully with him in the ranks of the redeemed army, for the glorious reward of which he hopes to be a partaker



on the morning of the resurrection. What splendid motives to induce the Christian to be faithful unto death! He is one of that great, united, and universal host, which is going forward to certain victory, achieving deeds of high renown, planting their footsteps above the stars, and writing their names, in characters of living light, over the gates of the celestial city

This subject, thus presented, suggests many encouraging reflections. The serious-minded, who are yet numbered among the unregenerate, often are depressed and kept mourning in their desolate and barren state of mind by not applying to themselves the rich and varied encouragements which naturally and graciously flow from the blessed system of our holy religion. This class, and it is composed of vast numbers, fear that, after having commenced the gospel race, they shall fail by the way. They are faithless in respect to divine aid. They see much around them of a discouraging nature; see many reputed Christians whose glimmering lights scarcely scatter the thick darkness of the wilderness; and hear many a doleful song from that country which should, and most certainly would be, to the living, spiritual Christian, 'the land of Beulah,' the very suburbs of heaven. So in former times, the Israelites were discouraged by the difficulties of the wilderness way that

spread out before them; they murmured for the flesh-pots of Egypt, although at the immense price of national bondage, rather than follow that glorious pillar of fire and cloud, which was leading them with a sure and steady progress to the lovely valleys of Canaan. The serious mind should ever remember that God is not afar off. He hideth not himself in darkness. Creation is even now full of the symbols of his presence, as palpable and as strongly indicated to the man of faith, as the pillar that stretches itself from earth to the skies, alternately in the van and the rear of the chosen tribes. Would not thousands, who now linger behind, while the church is marching onward, arise at once, if they could only have the assurance that their steps should not falter, in the heavenly pathway? Will it encourage this class to tell them that a humble yet determined resolution to serve the God of Jacob through weakness and in strength, will be answered by a blessing from Jehovah? Will it animate one of these desponding minds to learn that so far as we trust or rely upon God, just so far additional resolution, comfort, light, encouragement, and a good assurance is bountifully bestowed, through Jesus Christ, by the same beneficent hand that pours out the light of day upon all lands, and sprinkles the reviving dews, and opens the treasures of the clouds upon the parched

plains—that same Almighty One, who is perpetually giving, without measure and without price, even to the ungrateful and the unthankful? All this—yea, more, may be told to this class of hesitating mourners on the unerring authority of the King of kings and Lord of lords. It is precious to the downcast soul to learn that the promises of peace and mercy may be applied to its own case—its own particular wants.

Christians may reap a new and ever increasing harvest of blessed assurance from the word and the mighty spirit of the text. Yes, Christian, thine every step is ever attended by an angel—the angel of the covenant—unseen he may be to the natural eye—but he certainly is near thee, if thou standest on holy ground. His love passeth the friendship of earth. His steps are with thine when thou passeth through the chilling waters of the sea of death. Why, oh Christian, dost thou not put on an unfailing courage, and shout with a song of triumph as loud as the thunder of the great deep, when it cries to heaven from its lowest caverns. Strong is thy defence! Thine attendant is one whose eye is dreadful to thine enemies; but full, overflowing with tender compassions for thee!

The wide spread ‘Sacramental host of the church, gathers all its confidence and its full assurance of victory from this unsealed and

unfathomable fountain of endless consolation. Let us for one brief moment look at the attitude of the church. Now, perhaps, in tears, in dust, trodden down by the oppressor and stained with her own blood; to-morrow, she shines like some glorious one, and the kings of the earth tremble before the holy splendors of her countenance. To-day, following with mournful step a brother in Jesus to the lonely tomb; to-morrow, with a loud song proclaiming that all is well with him who is in the dust; all is well this side of death, and all is triumphant beyond! To-day, a seemingly feeble band against which, proud words of scorn are levelled; to-morrow, a host with banners streaming under the whole heaven, with more than mortal music burdening every breeze—with crowns and plumes, and the intense gleams of immortal panoply, kindling on every cloud, and illuminating every mountain and valley. Well might the seer, who, for gold, sought out a curse for Jacob, say: How goodly are thy tents, oh Jacob, and thy tabernacles, oh Israel!

This was a prospective view—only lifting up a little the curtain which hung over the future prospects of the church. The same thought is amplified, if not adorned, by Pollock, the pious poet, who sung his soul to sleep with such strains as these:—

‘ How fair the daughter of Jerusalem, then!

How gloriously from Zion's hill she looked!  
 Cloth'd with the sun; and in her train the moon;  
 And on her head a coronet of stars;  
 And girding round her waist, with heavenly grace,  
 The bow of mercy bright; and in her hand  
 Immanuel's cross—her sceptre and her hope."

But these views, rich as they are with unspeakable blessings, are taken from the earth. The church now is seen going farther on to the very place which God has prepared for her. Change and vicissitude and death invaded the territories of Jacob below; but he has a place now prepared for him; a kingdom not to be measured by human meters, not invaded by earthly woes, or battle, or change. Countless angels are throwing open the gates to this region, as immeasurably wide as it is beautiful, beyond the power of language to paint; and trumpets and harps pouring forth the volumes of song such as earth never heard, summon the redeemed to their last, joyful resting place.

Death is now no more. Sin is shut out forever. Heaven burns with its accumulated bliss. It has now reaped the great harvest of the earth. It now, to its other songs, hath added the greater one of *redeeming love*. And now beyond this point, it is not permitted to penetrate farther. Here this blessed interdiction begins—eye hath not seen—ear hath not heard—heart hath not conceived. All beyond is glory unsufferably bright.

JOHN V. 39.

Search the Scriptures.

Although the way to heaven is luminous, delightful, and safe; yet it is accompanied with trials, difficulties and conflicts. There are many false guides to mislead us, and many enemies to encounter. It is, therefore, important to find a sure direction, an unerring and faithful guide, and a firm and valiant protector.

All these wants have been supplied by the eternal God. Christ, the great captain of our salvation, has trodden the road himself, and conquered every enemy. He now guards and defends all who commit themselves to his care and keeping, and the holy Scriptures afford a sure direction to God, to happiness, and to heaven.

## THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

The word scripture, in its original sense, is of the same import with writing. The several books contained in the Bible are called Scriptures by way of eminence, as they are the most important of all writings.

*They are holy;*—full of truth and grace; inimitable in simplicity, and glowing with celestial love to a fallen world. The purity of their doctrines and precepts; the exquisite beauty, majesty, and elevation of their general bearing,

“ Their great original proclaim.”

*They are true.*—Their appearance is ancient, and the variety in their style is an evidence that they were composed by different persons, at different and distant times, and yet, in all their parts, they unite in promoting one great object. Bad men could not have written what so plainly condemns all sin, especially when they had a prospect of gaining nothing by the deception but reproach, imprisonment, torture, and death; and good men would not have deceived mankind by pretending that an invention of their own was a revelation from heaven.

Although they are not in opposition to human wisdom, enlightened by the spirit of God—yet they rise infinitely superior to its greatest efforts and loftiest conceptions, and

are contrary to that corruption of the heart which impostors would inculcate as the means of gaining their ends.

They give an account of various miracles which must have been performed by the power of God, as no man could have done them of himself. Deceptions they could not have been, because they were wrought in the open face of day, in the midst of vast multitudes of people, the most of whom were enemies, ready and anxious to expose the fraud if any such had really existed; and memorials of them were taken on the spot, preserved and handed down from generation to generation.

The religion of the Scriptures, was, at first, established and supported by these miracles, and has ever since maintained a powerful influence in the world, notwithstanding the numerous and high handed efforts made to destroy it.

There are a great number of prophecies in these Scriptures that have been fulfilled to the very letter and spirit of the text—a most satisfactory and incontrovertible evidence of their truth and authenticity as a revelation from God.

Those which relate to the destruction of ancient nations and cities were recorded in numerous instances hundreds of years before their accomplishment.

The prophecies, having for their grand sub-



jects the incarnation of the Son of God, his life, labors, and sufferings; his death, resurrection, and ascension, are standing monuments in confirmation of the authority of holy writ.

The prophecies respecting the Jews—pointing out the destruction of their temple and city by the Romans, their dispersion into all lands, their preservation as a distinct people, have been openly fulfilled and continue fulfilling to the present day, to the utter astonishment of all who have doubted, or may doubt, the genuineness of the holy Scriptures as having originated in God, bearing his signature and expressive of his character.

*They contain the most important truths.*—The character and attributes of God, his eternity, his omnipresence, his immensity, his wisdom, goodness, justice, holiness, and mercy, are written on the sacred page, as it were with sunbeams.

The immortality of the soul, its infinite merit, immense value, the vast price paid for it, and what should be our great care and concern in this life; these weighty and important subjects, which puzzled and bewildered the best and wisest of the ancients, are here fully explained and distinctly stated.

The holy Scriptures are addressed to all mankind as sinners; all having sinned and come short of the glory of God; and this single

circumstance alone raises them above price, and throws a splendor over these precious writings, unrivalled by any human production.

They are the words of reconciliation from an offended sovereign to his rebellious subjects, containing merciful offers of grace and salvation. When men, therefore, feel themselves to be sinners, and discover their need of a Saviour, the truth, that Jesus came into the world to save sinners, is, to them, valuable above every thing else.

The important question, what must I do to be saved? is here satisfactorily answered; and the manner, in which God will be approached and worshipped by rational intelligences, pointed out with clearness, fidelity, and truth.

*They are full of divine consolation.*—They teach us to address God as our Father in heaven, and declare that his ear is ever open to our prayers, and his hand to supply our wants. As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him; for he knoweth our frame; he remembereth we are but dust. What a resource in the hour of need! What a shelter from the storm! What a solace in seasons of distress, and in the day of peril!

“ Our numerous griefs are here redrest,  
And all our wants supplied :  
Naught we can ask to make us blest  
Is in this book denied.”

These consolatory sayings of the Divine Spirit, calm the agitated mind in its worst distress. They shed down upon the soul a heaven of love, and fill the ambient air with the breath of paradise.

“ Here the Redeemer’s welcome voice  
Spreads heavenly peace around,  
And life and everlasting joys  
Attend the blissful sound.”

Thy statues, says David, have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage; unless thy law had been my delight, I should have perished in my afflictions.

*They will endure forever.*—The time is not distant when all present things shall have passed away, without leaving a trace behind to remind us that they ever were. The lights of literature, of science, and of the arts, which now dazzle and charm, will then be covered with the shadows of night; and the flowers of friendship, of home, and of society, shall lie withered and dead upon the turf that covers us. The brother, the friends of our youth, the companion of our joys and sorrows, the children that are dear to us, the possessions we enjoy, the sun which shines upon us, yea, every earthly good will fail us. All in this world is changing and uncertain. Where can we rest? Where can we fix our feet and say, this will not sink under us—this will abide forever? The trees are falling to naught, the

stones are wasting away, the rivers are hastening to the ocean, the tombs of our fathers are breaking up, the monuments of fame are crumbling into dust. Our fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live forever? All flesh is grass, and all the glory of man is as the flower of the field; the grass withereth, the flower thereof fadeth away, but the word of the Lord endureth forever. Heaven and earth, says Christ, shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

Here then is something that will remain after the world shall have forsaken us, and all earthly prospects are blasted. These Scriptures change not; their presence will more than fill the void which the absence of earth-born joys has created in the smitten breast. In a word—they will be found inexpressibly precious in the hour of death, in the day of judgment, and through eternity.

#### THE SCRIPTURES SHOULD BE SEARCHED.

*It is Christ's command.*—Search the Scriptures, says the adorable Jesus, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they that testify of me. Blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it.

The Apostle writes, let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; and he charges the Thessalonians, that his epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.

The wise man urges us to cry after knowledge, to seek her as silver, and search for her as hidden treasure. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom. David was always studying the Scriptures, and describes the righteous man as one whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night. Timothy was acquainted with the Scriptures from a child. Apollos was mighty in the Scriptures. The primitive Christians read the Scriptures frequently, and with great care, and the most eminent saints, in all ages of the world, received the first kindlings of that bright flame, which distinguished them as burning and shining lights, from this hallowed source.

*It is a means of obtaining salvation.*—The Scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus, and are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good word and work. What things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope.

They are compared to a mirror, in which we behold the glory of the Lord, and are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord.

Thy law, says the royal Psalmist, is perfect, converting the soul; and the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord, shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth, it shall prosper.

By searching the Scriptures we shall acquaint ourselves with God, and be at peace, and thereby good shall come unto us.

*It is a source of happiness.*

“This world is a region of outsides, a land of shadows.”

This world, though exceedingly attractive, is deceitful, and unworthy of our esteem and love. Its promises of constancy and fulness of joy are empty and vain.

“We grasp the phantoms and we find them air.”

It is a continued scene of disappointed hopes and blasted expectations; thickly strewn over with the broken and decayed fragments of the pride and ambition of man. The humiliating truth, that all is vanity, is written upon his fairest and proudest works, while the lips of the dying, and the cold memorials of the dead, announce it in language more than human.

But here, in searching these Scriptures, we shall find true happiness. Here, we shall not be disappointed; for, great peace have they that love thy law. Their peace shall flow as

a river, and their righteousness as the waves of the sea.

They should be searched with diligence, in dependence upon divine aid, and with prayer. The richness and abundance of the mine, which can never be exhausted, are motives sufficiently powerful to excite us to activity and perseverance in his holy work.

*Neglecting to search the Scriptures is productive of much evil.*—The ignorance and enmity of the opposers of these Scriptures may be attributed to this neglect. They have either examined them without due deference to the high authority whence they have emanated, and the important matter which they contain, or they have scornfully rejected them without even glancing at their contents, condemning them upon the false evidences of others, as weak and as wicked as themselves; and, therefore, their judgment, in regard to these holy writings, is wholly worthless, beneath the attention of rational and thinking men.

Some have pretended that searching the Scriptures is the grand cause of the many false and groundless notions which prevail among men, and of the dreadful persecutions which blot the pages of church history. The contrary, however, may be asserted without danger of being fairly disproved. A cloud of witnesses there are, even of those who had

been once the proudest champions in the enemy's ranks, to establish the truth that searching the Scriptures, with an humble, penitently and contrite heart, is conducive of health to the soul, light to the understanding, and peace to the mind. Many of these had been formerly well acquainted with the letter of the Scriptures, had searched them with proud hearts, and with a fixed resolution not to be convinced by their reasonings or subdued by their threatenings. They had summoned them to the bar of reason, decorated with the insignia of philosophy, and there branded them with infamy; but when their prospects in life changed—when the dungeon and the scaffold stood before them—when death and eternity stared them in the face, and earth and worlds were sinking—with what eager haste they fled to these strong holds for help! with what ravishing joy they clasped and clung to the sacred truths they had once despised!

Our Lord attributes the infidel principles of the Sadducees to their ignorance of the Scriptures; ye do err, says he, not knowing the Scriptures or the power of God; and in a very solemn manner declares, that whosoever rejecteth Him and receiveth not his words, hath one that judgeth him, even the word which he hath spoken, which will *judge him at the last day*.

In a word—nothing can be of greater mag-



nitude in the gradations of intelligence than what is written in the holy Scriptures.

They are of higher antiquity, and treat upon more important, sublime, and glorious subjects than any other records to be found in the archives of the universe. All human productions when compared to them are imbecile, and perishable. The literary efforts of the finest writers in ancient or modern times are eclipsed by the luminous rays of divine light that surround them. They stand apart, alone, and without a rival—a splendid demonstration of God's love to rebellious worms. In perusing them, we hold converse with a long line of the greatest worthies of antiquity; both worlds are connected, and a vast and illimitable field opened for instruction and warning.

The wisest philosophers, the scholar and the statesman, have bowed down before the majesty of their rebuke, and have acknowledged, with astonishment, admiration, and awe, the elegance of their style, the purity of their morals, and the grandeur and magnificence of the imagery with which they abound. To these venerable documents they are largely indebted for the great mass of information that distinguishes their noblest works. In a word, the whole galaxy of the arts and sciences have a nearer or more distant connexion with them, as the source from which they have emanated, and under whose foster-

ing influence they have grown up to eminence, utility, and importance. But what ennobles and dignifies these revealed truths above every thing else, is their salutary and gracious influence upon society. Separate from all other considerations, in this particular, they occupy a place as remarkable as it is elevated.

Unmoved by the machinations of enemies, and shining in a sphere where no power can paralyze their efforts, or change their character for integrity, constancy, and active benevolence, they pass through the moral heavens, shedding down their holy light, on those who sit in the valley and shadow of death—opening upon the mind of man the blissful abodes of everlasting day, without a cloud to intercept the vision, the whisper of a doubt, or the intrusion of a fear to perplex or bewilder.



HEB. xi, 24, 25.

By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharach's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

The history of Moses is the finest specimen of bold, graphic and illustrious biography to be found in the volume of inspiration. The character of this wonderful man is drawn with great accuracy and skill. It is a glowing portrait of the majesty of virtue, and the magnanimity of a high minded patriot and devoted servant of God.

We are not called to the contemplation of a bold adventurer, preying upon the liberties of his fellow men, or glorying in the distresses which his avaricious hand had wrought—nor of another Alexander, waging war with the whole world, reeking with the blood of millions, and towering above his compeers in all the haughtiness of a vain glorious, ostentatious

pride. We contemplate a man raised to the pinnacle of earthly grandeur, surrounded by courtly friends, and with the prospect before him of bearing an imperial sceptre—yet voluntarily renouncing these flattering distinctions, giving up every claim to empire, and casting his lot with a poor, despised and persecuted people.

MOSES.

The early history of this man of God is distinguished by the gracious interpositions of divine providence. Influenced by the God of Israel, his parents preserved the beautiful infant when his life was menaced by the cruel edict of Pharaoh, and while he was exposed to the watery element, in a bark of rushes, a mysterious power provided for his safety; a royal hand snatched him from his frail bed, and committed him to his own mother's bosom; and, under maternal guardianship, he grew up in the fear and love of the God of his fathers.

When he had attained a proper age, he was introduced to all the luxuries and blandishments of Pharaoh's court. Philosophers and statesmen were invested with the care of his education. He became learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in word and deed. Initiated in the schools of the Magi, he became an eminent scholar and a

profound statesman. As one of the princes of Egypt, the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter, the presumptive heir of a crown and regal honors, he was placed far above want—he moved in a circle brightened by the countenance of the great, the wise, and the noble; yet he was not intoxicated by royal favor, nor seduced by the allurements of ambition. The gilded phantasies which floated around him, the brilliant smiles and heartless protestations were incapable of chaining his mind or enslaving his noble powers. High and holy was his calling. He, therefore, rejected every thing intervening between him and his God, or the mighty purpose which labored in his breast—even the deliverance of his Hebrew brethren from captivity and death. For this purpose he yielded himself up a willing victim to all the consequences of an act which, in the estimation of human policy, would appear inconsideration or extreme rashness.

The feelings of many are respondent only to the glare and tinsel of the earth. Riches captivate their imagination, titles feed their vanity, the flatteries of the great are music in their ears, the principles of truth and the beauty of religion they either impiously outrage or wholly disregard. An unexpected elevation in life fills them with ideas of their own importance, and a desire to bury forever the thoughts of their former insignificance and

poverty. But neither nobleness of birth, the shout of applause, nor the possession of wealth, can confer goodness or implant virtue in the soul. Virtue springs not from earth; it has not its origin in gold and silver, in honor or dishonor; and he who would base his fortunes on such frail materials, is building on sand. Art thou noble by birth—has fortune thrown over thee a radiated light, or a gemmed coronet? Oh, remember there is a nobler ancestry than mouldy parchments confirm. There are riches that can never waste away, and a laurel wreath that withers not. Art thou poor, despised and broken hearted? The Lord of the universe is thy friend; and if thou hast taken him for thy portion, thou art rich indeed. The treasures of kings are but dross when compared to thine; thy riches shall endure when crowns and sceptres shall have crumbled into dust; thou hast an heirship to an immortal, glorious kingdom, under a heavenly meridian.

To proceed—Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter—he was in the maturity of manhood, fully adequate to the task of examining and choosing for himself when he took this decisive and honorable step. He was, says the inspired historian, full forty years of age—a period in the life of man when ambition often usurps unlimited power over the mind. Besides, he was basking in the

sunshine of royal favor, and breathing the fascinating air of a palace. The value this great man placed upon these empty, earthly vanities, stamps him at once a saint and a hero. With a precision more than human, he penetrated every principle of their nature, proved them to be false, hollow, unsatisfying; and, spurning their united efforts to beguile and ensnare him, with a manly energy shook off the gilded fetters and proclaimed himself free.

These considerations alone, however weighty, were not the only ones in view of which he acted. Moses, to have acknowledged his title, would have been required to relinquish the religion of his fathers, and forfeit his birth-right as one of the children of Abraham. The decided manner in which Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, commands our admiration. The sacrifice was great—it was unprecedented! Behold him throwing off the imperial purple, divesting himself of the gaudy trappings of distinction—eyeing the sceptre, the crown, the throne, with indifference; while from his bright elevation he extends his view to his enslaved countrymen, turning his back upon an impious, idolatrous, yet seductive court, he descended from the eminence of kings with a noble and majestic mien; he chose the road to the poor cottages of the oppressed Israelites.



## HIS CHOICE.

And now we find Moses among the people of God. Here the children of Israel are emphatically denominated the people of God. A more sublime title could not have been given them. The historian leaves the contrast between the subjects and honors of an earthly potentate, and the simple epithet—people of God—to be filled up by the contemplative mind.

The condition of Israel's descendants at this time was deplorable. Their cup was full of bitterness. A lamentation rose continually over murdered innocents throughout distracted Goshen. A deep horror had seized upon their senses. They were despised, trodden down and insulted. Sorely galled with the heavy yoke and bleeding from the lash of their hard taskmasters, they wept before the Lord, and their cry pierced the heavens. Jehovah was not unmindful of their sufferings; in all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bare them and carried them all the days of old. His eye was fixed intensely upon them, and his hand was stretched out to remove the cloud that hung around their hopes. He pronounced them his people—a peculiar people—a chosen people—a people for whom was

held in reversion a well watered fruitful country—the rich, beautiful Canaan, the garden of the earth. A people whose protector, comforter and guide was the mighty God of Jacob. For as an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone did lead them, and there was no strange god with them. A people through whom all the families of the earth were to be made glad, and by whose instrumentality the river of life should overflow its banks and refresh the nations; a people for whose deliverance Egypt was enveloped with darkness, the Nile crimsoned with blood, the atmosphere darkened with insects, and a realm clothed in sackcloth for all the first born of man smitten with sudden and unexpected death; a people over whose fortunes rose a peerless star, gleaming fiery wrath to their enemies, but shedding, over the path of the dismayed and crest-fallen, light, direction and security. Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy. Thou, in thy mercy, hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto the holy habitation.

These were the people of his choice. Unlike the soft and effeminate, he chose to suffer affliction with them. He did not join them

for the loaves and fishes, or to gratify a love of ease. No; he purposed, if he could not break their iron yoke, to share their bondage, participate in their toils, abide their fate; in short, to cleave to them and them only in weal or woe.

Many there are who mate themselves with religion when she wears a lovely aspect, lifts her head above the clouds, and walks in the high places of the earth; but when she is arrayed in the drapery of sorrow, when around her plays the lightning, rolls the thunder, and a persecuting world are in arms against her--then these craven friends are not--they are shaken off by the tempest--the trumpet's spirit-stirring voice hath swept them away.

Not so with Moses. Were the people of God afflicted--were they universally despised---were they destined to die in the field of battle---the purposes of his steady soul would respond to their dying accents, and victory or death hung on his lips, was written on his brow, flamed from his burnished shield, and flashed from his spear.

#### WHAT INFLUENCED HIS CHOICE.

By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He believed in God. This fundamental principle of his holy religion was deeply imprinted in his soul; it preserved him

from being seduced by the most fascinating lures that earth can hold out to man. It was faith that influenced him in making a prompt decision and a wise choice. His faith rose not out of natural circumstances; it was not taught in the schools of the philosophers. It was infinitely superior to any thing human, inspiring him with sublime and heavenly sentiments, and dictating a noble, generous, and virtuous conduct.

The faith exercised by Moses was, no doubt, the result of maternal instructions. Placed under his mother's care in his infancy, she had a favorable opportunity of forming his mind to a reliance and divine faith in his Maker. By initiating him into the religion of his ancestors, she prepared him to act in the spirited manner represented in the text, and opened the way for an elevation of character unattainable on worldly principles, or through means unsanctioned by divine providence.

By faith he was taught to despise empty and unavailing honors---honors limited in their duration, unsatisfying in their nature, and pernicious in their consequences---pleasures that like the tender flowrets of spring look lovely and inviting for a season, but soon wither and die. The faith by which Moses was influenced, not only produced these extraordinary results, but it also opened upon his soul the visions of immortality. By faith he passed

into the holy of holies, and stood, in the perceptions of a sanctified mind, before that great Being, who is invisible to material organs. There he beheld the glorious recompense, the substantial reward, the eternal rest, the heavenly inheritance. He had respect to these---they were esteemed worthy his chief regard and most ardent love---objects for which no sacrifice was too dear or too great to hazard. The renown and celebrity he obtained as the saviour, legislator, and chief of a mighty nation, were not thrown into the scale. They had no connexion with the faith eulogized by the Apostle. They occupy a distinct and separate place in the history of Moses. He acted in view of eternal things, in reference to a future state, and under the superintendence and direction of unerring wisdom. Without faith it is impossible to please God. Faith is the Christian's shield; while covered with this armor he remains secure---the malignant arrows of sin and satan fall harmless at his feet. Faith nerves the Christian with superhuman energy; and gives him strength to remove mountains. The dashings of the huge billows and the frantic ravings of the tempest are breasted by him who reposes unbounded confidence in the rock of his salvation; and, at last, having overcome all enemies, his song of praise echoes from the cloudless towers of the New Jerusalem.

By faith the ancients acquired a knowledge of the true God, and obtained a good report. Through faith we understand the worlds were framed by the word of God. By faith Abel offered unto God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain---Enoch was translated that he should not see death, and Noah, being warned by God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house. Abraham by faith journeyed into a strange land, not knowing whither he went. By faith Isaac was offered up---Jacob and Esau blessed concerning things to come. By faith Jacob when he was dying blessed both the sons of Joseph, and worshipped leaning upon the top of his staff. By faith the walls of Jericho were levelled with their foundations. Actuated and upheld by this pre-eminently powerful principle, millions of martyrs have cheerfully suffered the spoiling of their goods, and even laid down their lives with joy.

From the illustrious examples we have adduced we learn that, without the faith of the Gospel,

“ Were we possessors of the earth,  
And called the stars our own,”—

we should be poor indeed---our hopes of heaven groundless and our wishes vain.

We also learn that decision is a very important and necessary ingredient in the cha-

racter of him who would be on the Lord's side. Fluctuating principles are valueless. To halt between God and mammon is a mark of weakness and a sure prelude to destruction. If the Lord be God, serve him. Let us, then, be prompt and decided, firm to our purpose, and altogether persuaded to be Christians.

Self-denial is another lesson we are taught by the conduct of Moses. It is essentially necessary to our happiness. If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me, are the words of Jesus. Without this we cannot obtain the friendship of God. When self rules, anarchy is abroad, religion is despised, and the Almighty disregarded; but when this usurper is dethroned, and he, whose right it is to reign, ascends the throne of our affections, order and peace are restored---the soul breathes a pure atmosphere, and holds glorious communion with a present God.

Finally---the picture which we have endeavoured to sketch should make deep impressions on the mind. The assemblage of virtues which adorn the character of Moses, the brilliant and the mild, blended together in sweet harmony, are worthy of the noblest emulation and the highest praise. Although we may never rise to the same eminence with this Bible saint, or be called upon to make

such great sacrifices, we cannot expect to live even a brief life without passing through waters of affliction and being tried by the strongest temptations. In the humbler walks of life, where the current seems to run smoothly, men experience the usual portion of sorrow and suffering as their entailed inheritance. At such times the strength of religious principle is a powerful and necessary auxiliary in guarding the heart and influencing the practice. Without it we are involved in perplexity and doubt, left to the uncontrolled exercise of unsanctified affections and vain imaginations, treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. How necessary, then, that we should follow the example of Moses, and secure the friendship and favor of the divine Being by an early and decided renunciation of every thing, however dear, that might compete with a devoted attachment to his religion and laws. We should make our choice, and make it without delay. There are no barriers to obstruct us; no powerful, inherent inability with which to contend. The throne of our heavenly Father is open to our complaints and cries; the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is at hand to remedy every evil propensity of our nature. The supplies of the Gospel are rich and abounding. By the exercise of faith we may conquer every foe, pursue our journey



through the wilderness of sin in safety, and arrive, at last, through death's dreary portals, into the promised Canaan.

PSALM XXVI. 8.

Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place  
where thine honor dwelleth.

The patriarchs, the prophets, and other holy men, from the earliest ages of the world, have had the highest veneration for those places where the name of *Jehovah* was recorded, or where he made special exhibitions of his power and goodness.

Although their example, in this respect, is worthy of our imitation, yet there is great danger arising from an undue attachment to particular places, without an abiding remembrance that it is not the house we are to worship, but that *God* who hallows the house; nor its beauty that we are to admire, but the "beauty of the Lord." How solitary seemed the sepulchre and the garden to Mary, when she perceived not her Lord! What is this terrestrial paradise without his presence—

what would heaven be without his smiles? Answer, ye veterans of the cross—answer ye blood-washed company—ye bright angelic spirits! It is the Master we are to seek in the assembly of his saints—the God of all the earth. This was the object of the Psalmist, whose soul, attuned to holy meditation, and in the chastened transports of exalted thought, sings, “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple. For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand; I had rather be a door keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.” “I have loved” he continues, “the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honor dwelleth.” Deeply impressed with these sentiments, and awed into the most profound reverence, *we* bow before a present God, humbly imploring his divine aid to assist us in dedicating a temple to his service. We shall inquire,

I. What is implied in loving the habitation of the Lord’s house?

II. Why do holy men love his habitation? and then proceed to the main object of our present meeting.

I. What is implied in loving the habitation of the Lord’s house? To love the habita-

tion of the Lord, implies a knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, as God manifest in the flesh—Emmanuel, God with us—the Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

It implies a knowledge of him, as the image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature: for by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And without him was not any thing made that was made. Behold his footsteps in the sea; hear his thunderings borne upon the viewless winds, and read the traces of his hand on yonder blue expanse!

“ The spacious earth and spreading flood  
Proclaim the wise, the powerful God;  
And his rich glories from afar,  
Sparkle in every rolling star.”

It implies a knowledge of him as our prophet, priest and king, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he be-

came poor, that ye, through his poverty, might be rich.

“ Darkness his curtain, and his bed the dust.  
When stars and sun were dust beneath his throne,  
He seized our dreadful right ; the load sustained,  
And heav'd the mountain from a guilty world ;  
A thousand worlds so bought, were bought too dear.”

Here we pause, we wonder, we admire. Our souls are swallowed up in contemplating the blaze of that stupendous love of Christ, which the cruel hatred of an ungrateful world could not extinguish ; that astonishing meekness which no malicious treatment could overwhelm ; that wonderful patience which bore the bitterest taunts, and the most excruciating tortures without a murmur ; and above all—that unprecedented spirit of forgiveness which invites poor sinners to take shelter in that bosom they had covered with scars, and wraps them up in the folds of its love and mercy !

“ Bound every heart, and every bosom burn ;  
Praise flow forever—if astonishment  
Will give thee leave—my praise forever flow.  
Eternity too short to speak thy praise,  
Or fathom thy profound of love to man.”

Our love of the Lord's house is implied by our diligent attendance, while there, on his ordinances. This attendance must be given, not as a matter of mere formality in compliance with the prevailing custom. We may be punctual in our observance of the external duties of the house of God, and yet have nei-

ther part nor lot in the matter. They are not all Israel, who are of Israel. Indeed an experimental knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, and a devotional frame of mind, are inseparably connected with the true worship of God. Without this necessary qualification, we shall not be capable of perceiving the perfections of his character, as they are reflected through the rich variety of ways by which he communicates his grace to the soul.

You must not only show yourselves zealous in the love of the Lord's house, by being present on all proper occasions; but you must pray fervently to the God of all grace, that the word here dispensed may be attended by the demonstration of the Spirit, and with power; that here sinners may be awakened, souls converted, and christians built up in their most holy faith. With all this, you must enter the field yourselves, and aid your ministers, not by your prayers alone, but by the most arduous and unremitting efforts, to press upon your fellow men the importance of those truths which are announced and enforced from the pulpit. Indeed such is their importance, so tremendous their consequences, involving the destinies of all around you, that they deserve your most earnest attention. Soon, very soon, it may be lamented that our opportunities for doing good are lost in the surge of that obli-

ous wave which overwhelms all present things.  
But,

II. Why do holy men love the habitation of the Lord's house? Because it is "the place where his honor dwelleth." There, he is eminently present as the father of his family. There, are the emanations of his countenance, and the rich droppings of the heavenly manna. He, who has promised to supply all the wants of his people, is there. He giveth liberally and upbraideth not. He is there, who is perfectly acquainted with all their trials, sorrows and afflictions. Are they wrecked, and plundered of every joy? are they friendless, wretched and forlorn? Even for them there is a season of rest, a reciprocation of feeling in the dear Redeemer. For he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. How well qualified, then, is such a High Priest, touched as he is with the feeling of our infirmities, to pour the oil of consolation into the wounded spirit, and to bind up the broken heart!

In the christian's temple, there is a holy of holies, a sacred retreat, a Bethel where the disencumbered, disenthralled soul finds access to the sprinkled throne of mercy, and communes with a present God. Here the veil of the invisible world is gently lifted up, and the devout christian is discovered by angels in

audience with the Deity: for truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ.

Holy men love the habitations of the Lord, because in his courts their ears were first saluted with the glad tidings of peace and salvation. There, the day-spring from on high visited their benighted souls. There, God met them, took their feet from the horrible pit, placed them on the rock of ages, and put a new song in their mouths, even praise to God. There too, they have fed in green pastures, and have drank copiously of the pure streams of the river of life, which make glad the city of our God.

Christians love the habitation of the Lord's house, because there they ripen for heaven. It is the gate through which they pass to the heavenly city. Here the weary pilgrim is pointed to the summit of those everlasting hills, where the followers of the Lamb are forever at rest. Here a reverential awe, with all the silent heaven of love, pervades, tranquillizes, and elevates his soul. Here the sublimated mind, rising from earth, soars by faith far beyond the limits of our world, enters the third heaven, and basks in the beams of uncreated bliss. Here the saints of God shall recover from the pollutions of their nature, and expatiate on the beauty and the sublimity of divine knowledge. Here their souls shall be imbued with



an unction from on high, and glow with the pure flame of holy love. Here they shall anticipate the joys of the heavenly world. And when they shall have left this earthly tabernacle, and are translated to the region of light and love—that building of God, that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, they shall then claim kindred with the spirits of just men made perfect, mingle with the redeemed of the Lord, and surround his throne with unceasing praise.

On this interesting occasion, I am led to admire the goodness of God, in preserving his true worship through every age of the world. Sacrifices were offered by the children of men, almost from the creation to the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage. Heaven's court was held on the summit of Sinai. While encircled with the insignia of the great God, the Jewish legislator received the commandments written on tables of stone, as also the law, and a minute description of the tabernacle which he was commanded to erect for *Jehovah* to dwell in.

At the dedication of the temple by Solomon, the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests themselves could not enter. Such was the overwhelming influence of the King of kings and Lord of lords, that the children of Israel bowed themselves with their faces to the ground, upon the pavement,

and worshipped and praised the Lord, saying, for he is good; for his mercy endureth forever.

Although the second temple was inferior to that built by Solomon, in splendor and magnificence; yet it was rendered more glorious by the appearance of the desire of all nations within its walls.

We do not read of any particular houses set apart for public worship among the primitive christians. It is probable there were none. The circumstances of danger with which they were surrounded, necessarily obliged them to consult their own safety by resorting to such places as were best calculated to secure them from the evil designs of their enemies. In process of time, however, a new order of things arose. The churches of Christ became rich, and increased in goods, having need of nothing. This state of outward prosperity contributed in no small degree, to debase the character and pervert the principles of christianity. Its true spirit evaporated. Its priests sunk into a state of apathy, pride, and worldly mindedness. Idolatry, superstition, and bigotry mingled unhallowed rites with the purity and simplicity of apostolic worship; and arrayed themselves in all the pomp and glitter of external forms and ceremonies.

While the christian church was thus enwrapt in the mists of visionary fanaticism,

and almost wholly obscured in the darkest gloom, a light from heaven broke upon the astonished world. It was the light of truth! It penetrated the cloisters of the venerable reformers of the fifteenth century, warmed their hearts, irradiated their minds, and led them in safety through the perils of a dreadful tempest under the thunders of the Vatican.

They came forth clothed in all the majesty of pure and undefiled religion, and with holy boldness denounced the sins, and exposed the corruptions of the church. Theirs was no strange fire; no enthusiasm caught from the spirit of the times. It was a flame from God's altar; communicated to their souls while surrounded by the presence of him who dwelt in the bush.

Nothing could withstand these valiant defenders of the faith once delivered to the saints. Ignorance and error fled before them. The proud champions of religious intolerance were discomfited; the battle was turned back to the gate, and the banners of oppression no longer waved over half the European world. It is true, the most desperate efforts were made, and the most cruel means resorted to, in order to stop the influence of the spirit and example of the reformers. But the torture and the faggot, the dungeon and the inquisition, all proved ineffectual. The blood of the martyrs refreshed the garden of the Lord. Another

and another host of heroes rose as from their ashes. They joined the armies of the cross; the spirit of the holy prophets fell upon them. They burst the fetters of superstition—they shook the temples of Dagon—they raised the song of triumph—they shouted victory!

Our American Israel has caught the hallowed sound, and from her thousand thousand cloud-capt hills, echoed back the holy anthem. Nor has the theme died upon our lips. We can still sweep the harp of Zion. The magnificent concert still reverberates along our shores. It strikes the vault of heaven, and, on the wings of every wind, wafts new gospel tidings to the land of our fathers.

“ Salvation! let the echo fly  
The spacious earth around;  
While all the armies of the sky  
Conspire to raise the sound.”

Two centuries only have transmitted their records to the courts of heaven since this land was tenanted by cruel hordes of savages. No smiling hamlet then cheered the eye. No holy sanctuary invited the weary to its sheltering bosom:

“ The sound of the church-going bell,  
Those valleys and hills never heard;  
Never sighed at the sound of a knell,  
Nor smiled when a sabbath appeared.”

But lo! another scene opens on our view.  
This vast region, late a howling wilderness,

now smiling in all the beauty of Eden, is spreading forth on every side her fertile fields, and healthful skies, to support and cherish the rose of Sharon planted in her bosom. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt, thou hast cast out the heathen and planted it, thou didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land; the hills were covered with its shadow, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedar.

This is a country favored of the Lord. Here he has set up his standard, proclaimed his name, and is establishing his everlasting kingdom. In these United States, no despotic laws bind the conscience; no galling chains fetter the soul. A broad, generous and liberal system of government opens a wide and effectual door for the preaching of the Gospel. It rears its fostering rampart around religions of every name; and affords shelter, and extends its protection equally to all, without distinction and without partiality. Truly then our lines have fallen in pleasant places.

Is not this a land of Bibles? are they not scattered over this vast continent? Though silent and unostentatious in their progress, they are extending their influence in every direction, enlightening the mind of man, and preparing him for the reception of an indwelling God.

Behold ! the Angel of the Church, having the everlasting Gospel to preach to all the dwellers upon earth, has visited our distant settlements, even now he is lighting on the isles of the sea, evangelizing the heathen world, arresting the car of Juggernaut in its cursed, immolating progress, and pushing the victories of the cross to earth's remotest bounds.

We have Bible and Sunday school institutions; marine, mite, and tract societies; associations for the relief of the widow, and the orphan; with many others, all directing their energies to promote one grand object; like the rays of light emanating from one source, and pouring a flood of divine glory on the inhabitants of our world.

Here then, in this goodly land, we have found out a place for *Jehovah* to dwell in. This altar we consecrate—this edifice we hallow. We dedicate this house to “the King eternal, immortal and invisible, the only wise God.” We devote it to that Being whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, who yet deigns to be present where two or three are assembled in his name. God is here. He who dwelt between the cherubim, the Being of beings, the God of love is beholding us.

Then let us bow with reverence, and may ministering angels attend, while we raise this

stone of our Ebenezer, and pouring forth the incense of grateful joy, call this God's House.

And now, what wait we for? Is the Lord's arm shortened, that he cannot save? Is his ear heavy, that he cannot hear? No, verily. He is unchangeably the same, yesterday, to-day, and forever:—the same being who dried up the waters of the great deep, and made a way for the ransomed of the Lord to pass over; the same who thundered from Sinai, wept in the garden of agony, hung on the cross, entered the prisons of the grave, burst the bars of death, and, loaded with the spoils of the cruel monster, rose triumphant to the right hand of the Majesty on high. Awake, then, awake; put on strength. O Arm of the Lord! Awake as in the ancient days, in the generations of old!

What a moment is this, fraught with the most awfully interesting consequences to all present! Both saint and sinner are deeply involved in the issue of the negotiations here commenced on this auspicious day.

My hearers! we preach in the view of the eternal world, in the view of devils, in the presence of men, of angels, and of the God of angels. Our subject is not confined to the fate of nations, or the rise and fall of empires. It does not regard merely this life's short span. It crosses death's narrow isthmus, extends to

the last judgment, and terminates only at the dissolution of worlds.

And will you, who are without God and without hope in the world, pass these things by as the trifles of an hour? You, who with a swift, though insensible motion, are gliding down the current of time, into the boundless ocean of eternity? Art thou still asleep in thy fragile bark, dreaming of perpetual sunshine amidst the veering winds that war around thee! Be warned of your danger, lest the terrors of the second death overtake you, and the Eternal God swear in his wrath thou shalt not enter into his rest.

O sinner! hast thou turned away from the house of God? hast thou despised the place where his honor dwelleth? or hast thou visited his house in vain? hast thou neglected thine immortal soul?—Why lingerest thou on forbidden ground? Why tarriest thou in all the plain? The Angel of the covenant commands thee to flee—yea, to flee for thy life—to flee to the mountain! He points thee to Calvary! Away then, speedily, to the friend of sinners, while it is called to-day; ere the night cometh, the night of death, when the sun of thy probation shall have set to rise no more forever.

Sinners! the hour is coming when the fearful midnight cry, ye dead arise, and come to judgment!—shall pierce the tombs of your fa-



thers;—when a drowsy world shall start from their guilty slumbers;—when the chambers of the sky shall be thrown open;—the everlasting doors give way, and the descending Jesus appear in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, to judge the quick and dead.

“—————From his great abode,  
Full on a whirlwind rides the dreadful God :  
The tempest's rattling winds, the fiery car,  
Ten thousand hosts his ministers of war ;  
The flaming Cherubim attend his flight,  
And heaven's foundations groan beneath the weight.”

There is but one door of hope for thy escape; but one ark of safety for thy sinking soul. That door we throw open, this day:—into that ark we earnestly invite thee. Here then you may touch the golden sceptre. This may be your birth place, the vestibule through which you may pass to the bosom of rejected love and mercy :—listening angels here wait to catch the first accents of your repentant prayer, and from these portals bear the joyful tidings to the courts above. And why not now return?—Even now the word of the Lord may fall like cloven tongues upon this assembly;—even now the soft breezes of God's mercy may waft the odour of a Saviour's love to your hearts, and breathe life into these slain. Your heavenly Joseph waits to make himself known to you. God hath sent him to preserve you. He desires to call you brethren. May this temple be indeed dedicated by the return of

some poor starving prodigal this day to his father's house !

My beloved brethren let us continue to love the habitation of the Lord's house—the place where his honor dwelleth. Take heed to your ways lest at any time you make shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience. Hold fast the form of sound words; let no man deceive you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. Let not the sophistry of that proud reasoning which is employed and controlled by the impenitent, selfish heart, lead you astray. Watch, lest you founder on the quicksands of metaphysical divinity, or are dashed against the rocks of modern skepticism. Be cautious how you hear, how you speak, how you receive. Prove all things; but do this by the word of God, studied with prayer for divine teaching. This is the way to acquire not prevalent opinions on religious subjects; but a practical knowledge of the truth. Pursue this method with a humble heart and an obedient life, and you will ever stand on firm and safe ground; for if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God. Here then fix your determined stand, and hold fast that which is good, rejecting all else. Cleave to the purity, the simplicity, the vitality of the Gospel. Aim at primitive christianity, that

which can be known, and felt, and realized; that which was taught by Christ and his apostles;—by Wesley, and Whitefield, and Tennant, and Coke, with many other worthies, who have fought a good fight, kept the faith, finished their course, and are now at rest from all their toils.

Be not satisfied with a good profession merely. Give to all with whom you associate a lucid and beautiful exhibition of the christian character, by a well ordered life and conversation. Be zealous for the honor of the cause which you have espoused. Be not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God, and the wisdom of God; but always bear about with you the words of our Lord: whosoever therefore is ashamed of me and of my words, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

Let not party zeal limit the full exercise of all those social sympathies so highly recommended by the Gospel. Cautiously avoid imbibing the narrow feelings of pharisaical professors. These check the current of that benevolence which is the essence of our holy religion, and which throws a halo of divine glory around its doctrines and precepts—a religion which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and

good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

Remember you are not partizans, but christians. You are not of Paul, nor of Apollos, nor of Cephas—but, of Christ. He hath bought you with his own most precious blood. You have enlisted under his banner. Then let *love to God and good will to man* be your motto. May this be inscribed on all your hearts; for upon these two precepts hang all the law and the prophets.

Finally, my brethren, whenever you approach this house, let it be that these holy precepts may be re-impressed more deeply on your hearts, and exhibited more distinctly in your lives. Always consider that you are about to appear before the self-existent, the omnipresent *Jehovah*. Suffer no vain desires, no unhallowed thoughts, no unsanctified feelings to intrude upon your devotions. Command every avenue to your souls, and when you find yourselves within the walls of this Zion, loose the sandals from off your feet, and know that you tread on holy ground. Here the Lord will speak peace to his people, and call poor sinners to repentance. Here he will meet you. Here he will clothe his priests with salvation, and here his saints shall shout aloud for joy.

Let us, therefore, be steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

And when the Sun of righteousness shall have dispelled the thick mists that encompass this habitation of mortals, and the kingdoms of this world shall have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ;—when nature, decrepid with age, languishes for her burial, and the dark places of our earth tremble;—when the dreadful trump of God shall have announced the end of time, and the consummation of all things, and heaven and earth shall pass away with a great noise;—then you shall mount with him through the fiery void, and in the full assembly of the saints, attended by an innumerable company of angels, enter into the splendid temple of the living God, shine as the brightness of the firmament in the kingdom of your Father, and join the myriads of the redeemed in ascribing might, and majesty, and dominion, to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever.

*Amen.*

### THE JUDGMENT DAY.

Our attention is not called to matters of a speculative nature, nor are our feelings arrested to pay the tribute of a tear or a sigh to the memory of the virtuous dead. It is not a splendid representation of empty trifles to which we are invited ; nor is our pencil dipped in the visionary colors of the poet. Ours is a loftier theme—a subject of stupendous moment, to which the events of millions of ages bear no proportion, and in which are involved the destinies of all mankind.

Treading on consecrated ground we unloose the sandals from off our feet, and with trembling hand lift the curtain of eternity.

The drama of the Judgment day is our theme.

“ That day of dread decision and despair !  
’Tis present to my thoughts—yet where is it ?  
Angels can’t tell me ; angels cannot guess  
The period, from created beings lock’d  
In darkness.”

## THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.

As all great and terrible events in the natural world are generally preceded by a stillness prophetic of their near approach, the eve preceding that day for which all other days are made, will be calm and unruffled, and an unusual serenity will pervade creation: the heavenly bodies will shine out unrivalled in beauty, and perform their various revolutions with the same precision as when first formed, and not a speck or a cloud dim the vaulted skies.

The awfully portentous day will open with the most tremendous displays of God's Eternal Majesty. Every thing which can strike terror to the heart of man will be introduced. Already every gem in the diadem of night is quenched in darkness—the king of day is shorn of his resplendent beams, and the pale, silvery light of the moon changed to a crimson, bloody hue.

“ In grandeur terrible all heaven descend,  
A swift archangel with his golden wing,  
As clouds and blots, that darken and disgrace  
The scene divine, sweeps stars and suns aside:  
And thus, all dross remov'd, heaven's own pure day  
Full on the confines of our ether flames.”

The trump of God will then be heard, thundering through the vast profound; and in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, monuments are burst asunder—the charnel houses

of the dead opened---the foundations of the great deep bared, and the dead, who had slept from time immemorial, bursting their bonds, start up in promiscuous crowds, shaking off the slumber of ages, and awaking to endless joy or hopeless misery.

“ Such shall the noise be, and the wild disorder,  
If things eternal may be like things earthly,  
Such the dire terror when the great Archangel  
Shakes the creation.”

The Judge will then appear; the man who stood at Pilate's bar, the once afflicted, persecuted, and slain Jesus. But O, how changed! In majesty terrible, he descends with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel and the trump of God; ten thousand thunders roll before him; his precursors gleam far and wide over the heavens; myriads of dazzling squadrons of bright angelic spirits attend him to his burning throne. Hallelujahs and acclamations of joy strike the lofty dome, and shake universal nature.

No just nor adequate conceptions can be formed of the vastness and splendor of this august tribunal. The thrones of the sceptered Cæsars, the arbiters of worlds, with all the pomp and magnificence of the universe dwindle into insignificance, vanity, and nothingness in comparison. Innumerable companies of angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, hang in rich and glorious clusters around it.



Flashes of fire issue from the Eternal's presence, and flaming cherubs encircle his footstool.

Before this tribunal we must all stand—all who have ever existed from the beginning of the world, and none shall be able to withstand or elude the summons. Were they to take the wings of the morning and fly to the remotest regions of space and observation, or shroud themselves in the dark abyss of that dreary gulf which separates hell from heaven, they would be sought out by the ministers of justice and hurried into the presence of the judge of the quick and dead. No shelter will be afforded them in all the immensity of creation, nor among the deep intricacies of unbounded nature. Every hiding place will be explored and made manifest by that great Being with whom there is no darkness nor uncertainty, nothing hidden nor mysterious.

We might as easily number the drops of the ocean, or the sands on its shores, the stars that glitter in the blue of heaven, or the leaves on the trees, as count the persons to be judged. Their number will exceed the utmost stretch of human calculation.

If this earth bears at one time eight hundred millions of souls, what a vast congregation will all the generations make which have succeeded each other for near five thousand years

and may continue to people our world till the general judgment.

All the inhabitants of other worlds, if there are any on those brilliant orbs floating in the immeasurable fields of space---they will hear the dreadful trump of God echoing from the portals of the sky, and crowd to meet him in the air.

We must all stand there. The illustrious and the obscure---the soldier and statesman---the blooming youth and venerable sire---small and great---rich and poor. Death is no respecter of persons. He knows no distinctions among men. In a few short years we must pass off the stage of time and be swept into the oblivious wave, until, reanimated by the voice of God, we take our station before the great white throne, and tremble or rejoice to hear our final sentence.

The day is broke which never more shall close. The great assize is come. The tutelary and destroying angels are returned. They have stopped the wheels of time; they have unlocked the dreary prisons of the dead, and thrown open the gates of hell. The heavenly orders, with the saints who are to judge the world, are placed in shining circles, or on fiery chariots wait in silent, awful expectation. The long expected trial of men and wicked angels is begun.

“ I see the Judge enthron’d, the flaming guard,

The volume opened, open'd every heart,  
A sunbeam pointing out each secret thought."

#### A TREMLING WORLD IS PLACED AT THE BAR.

And now all that has been done in the body is made manifest, whether it was good or whether it was evil. Every heart is bared, and the principles and emotions of every conscience exposed. The grand inquiry is made. What were the motives which actuated us in our several pursuits---the principles upon which we fixed our hopes, or raised our expectations? Were they of such a pure and evangelical nature as shall now bear the test---as shall now stand the fiery ordeal?

The hypocrite's hopes vanish into air---his thin disguise falls off, and all his false and borrowed beauty withers. To his horror and confusion, he is unmasked before those upon whom he had imposed by fair speeches and false pretensions to godliness.

The blood-thirsty conqueror, the tyrannical and cruel monarch, the ermined noble, and the proud prelate, levelled now to the condition of the meanest slave, await their trial in dread uncertainty and despair---shuddering at the punishments which await them.

See the promiscuous crowds---heaps on heaps are seen on every side, as far as eye can reach, or disembodied spirits ken---no measure to the lengthened space---no bounds,

no limits set. They wait, big with horror, and overwhelmed with despair.

Here stands a group of frightened Jews---their features distorted, and their bitter wailings the prelude to the beginnings and outbreakings of their approaching misery.

There is a motley crew, apparently worked up to the most fearful looking for of wrath and indignation. Those are the men who dipped their pens in the waters of Meribah---who, in their sacrilegious phrenzy, called the blessed Jesus imposter, and whose impious tongues uttered the foulest blasphemies.

Yonder is a multitude no man can number, composed of different grades of character, from all neutrals in religion down to the basest of the human race.

On the right of these a glorious company advances. Numbers join them on every hand of various nations, kindreds, tongues, and people. Here are Europeans and Americans---the children of Africa---the sons and daughters of Asia, and the red tribes of the wilderness. Here are all colors, all degrees, and all orders of men. *Who are these?*---Their appearance bespeaks their origin celestial, and their birth divine. A calm serenity, a placid resignation, a holy joy sits triumphant on each brow.

These are they who bathed their garments in dust and blood, having warred an honorable warfare, contended valiantly for the faith

of the Gospel, and, even in the hour of their greatest extremity, triumphed over the combined powers of earth and hell. Their near alliance to the Prince of the kings of the earth, is now acknowledged in the most public manner in the presence of men, and of angels, and of the God of angels.

Behold that company of weather beaten, worn out veterans, coming forward like a mighty army, distinguished by their heroic bearing and scarred honors. Those are the patriarchs, the worthies of Israel, the holy prophets, the evangelists, the blessed martyrs, the intrepid reformers in various ages of the christian church, the missionaries of the cross to heathen lands, the devoted and zealous ministers of Christ, whose valiant deeds are registered before the throne of God.

And now all mysteries are unravelled. The dispensations of olden times rendered simple and easy. The mysterious scenery of Jewish and Gospel days displayed and explained before the wondering eyes of all God's intelligences—and, in all the announcements of the divine character, in the various and hidden directions given to the complicated movements of the whole, are seen, mingled together like the colors of the rainbow in beautiful unison, the stern features of his justice, the mild traces of his love and mercy, and the brightest beamings of his majesty and glory.

The obscurity is removed from the history of the world, and the most perfect arrangement, symmetry and beauty are discoverable in all the ways, works, and designs of providence.

The wicked stand confounded ; the apologising and the sophist are silenced, and the infidel abashed and humbled. They hear and see and know now, who the Almighty whom they rejected, despised and confronted, is ; and begin to feel the full force of his vengeful arm.

The trial closes, the great decision is made, the separation line drawn, and the sentence pronounced on the evil and the good.

*On the good.* And then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

Had we an angel's pencil, we might pour-tray the glory and the felicity, which will be the portion of the saints of God in the realms of uncreated light. But the brightest seraph before his throne, would be inadequate to the task. Shall we, then, poor mortals, whose powers are circumscribed, confined to earth, and clogged with the incumbrances of flesh, presumptuously aspire to paint the bliss, the joy, the full fruition of a state so glorious—a happiness so complete, so consummate ?

*On the evil.* Here we are equally at a loss, nor are we able, to describe the horrors, the

sorrows of the despairing ones. Were it possible for us to disclose the secrets of their prison-house, the discovery would conjure up feelings the most indescribable, the most terrific and heart appalling; none would be uninterested. The trifler would be awed into solemnity; the careless and the unconcerned awakened and aroused. How fearfully should we look around us and ask the dreadful question, can we dwell in everlasting flames, or lie down in devouring fire? What heart searchings would commence, what tears of true repentance deluge the footstool of mercy! What inward groanings—what bitter outcries—what fearful anticipations—what strong resolutions—what solemn promises of future amendment—what fervent prayers—what overwhelming petitions! Heaven would be assailed with holy violence; every heart would be pierced through and through with the most agonizing reflections, and heave sighs so piteous, and so mournful, that they would finally issue in general lamentations of sorrow and grief.

“Heaven gives the needful but neglected call;  
What day, what hour, but knocks at human hearts  
To wake the soul to sense of future scenes.”

*The execution of the sentence pronounced upon our world.* For the heaven, and the earth, which are now, are reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

—————"At that destin'd hour,  
 By the loud trumpet summon'd to the charge,  
 See all the formidable sons of fire,  
 Eruptions, earthquakes, comets, lightnings, play  
 Their various engines, all at once disgorge  
 Their blazing magazines, and take by storm  
 This poor, terrestrial citadel of man."

Those immense magazines of liquid fire, that are confined in the centre of the earth, will then burst forth with terrible explosions. *Ætna* and *Vesuvius* will open their huge jaws, and emit burning lava and fragments of rocks heated for destruction. Thick clouds of vapour and smoke will roll down the hills and cover the distant plains. The elemental war commences. Fire and water, air and earth commingle together. Flashes of lightning in vivid streaks, gleam throughout creation.—Thunders break in every direction, and rattling peals succeed each other, till worlds from distant worlds re-echo dreadfully the direful clangor of the last agonies of dissolving nature. The towering mountains totter on their base; and earth, reeling from her centre, plunges in the fiery void. The curling volumes of liquid flame rise from the ruins of a burning world, and envelope all the realms of created nature.

“ The roaring winds  
 Now blow a hurricane around our world—  
 The dashing billows haughtily o'erleap  
 Their ancient barriers, deluging the earth !  
 Fires from beneath, and meteors from above  
 Portentous, unexpected, unexplained,  
 Kindle beacons in the skies, and the old  
 And crazy earth cracks even to her centre.



The pillars of our earth now tottering fall,  
 And nature with a dim and sickly eye  
 Awaits the close of all."

And do we stand on the broken fragment of time unconcerned? Are we suspended in the vast immensity of space—hanging over the depths of an unfathomable ocean, whose rude billows ever roll and never find a resting place—trembling on the verge of an eternity in which we may be lost, and exposed to the peltings of the storms of incensed justice—and yet do we sleep—we for whom all earth and heaven are in alarm—the sole cause of this surrounding wreck, this cruel storm—this elemental war?

*The creation of a new heaven and a new earth.*—And I saw, says the apocalyptic prophet, a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were past away. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

The everlasting doors give way, and the splendid city of the living God appears glit-

tering with gold, and shining with precious stones.

The blood washed company advances with crowns of gold upon their heads, and palms of victory in their hands, robed in the glorious garments of righteousness, attended by harpers harping on their harps, and angels hymning with celestial melody.

The triumphal chariot of the all-conquering Emmanuel, attended by the hosts of heaven, and the myriads of the redeemed, gains the suburbs of paradise; it enters through the gates of the city; the streets of the New Jerusalem are thronged. The celestial light of eternity falls in lovely splendor on the golden streets; no sun is needed in those blessed realms, for the glory of God and of the Lamb, like a mantle, shall forever cover the holy hill of Zion. Immortality throws an enchanting beauty over the countless millions of earth's redeemed ones, and the voice of their sorrow breaks out no more.

*The emerald gates close.* He which testifieth these things saith, surely I come quickly; Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus.



EZEKIEL, xxxvii. 4.

O ye dry bones, hear ye the word of the Lord.

These words, in their historical relation, have a primary reference to the restoration of the Jews; but spiritually considered, they are intended for our instruction in godliness, to make us wise unto salvation.

THE PRINCIPAL FEATURES OF A TRUE PROPHET.

The hand of the Lord was upon him. *The hand of the Lord* implies power. The Lord commissions and empowers men whom he chooses to declare salvation to a lost world. The Spirit of the Lord God is upon them, and they are anointed to preach the Gospel. Yea, even necessity is laid upon them, and a wo denounced against them, if they preach not the Gospel. It is asked, How can they preach unless they be sent? The Almighty answers

the question, and assumes the prerogative of sending ministers into his vineyard wholly to himself. I will send, says he, by whom I will send. Hence the church of England, in her ordination service, very properly requires candidates for the ministry to declare themselves inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to preach the Gospel. The first feature, then, by which we can distinguish a true prophet, is in the authority by which he officiates.

*And these signs shall follow.* The effect will be equal to the cause. If God sends the prophet, and authorises him to preach, the spirit of the prophecy and the divine illumination from above will attend his word.—There will be a voice within a voice. The signs of his apostleship will accompany him—the sound of his Master's footsteps will be heard behind him. For God sends no minister a warfare at his own charge. He promises to be with them to the end, that his word which they speak shall not return void, but accomplish the great purpose for which it was intended.

This divine authority, accompanying the word to the hearts and consciences of men, is the touchstone; for we fail in preaching without the assistance of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit which makes alive, the letter only kills.

“ The still small voice is wanted ; He must speak,

Whose word at once leaps forth to its effect,  
Who calls for things that are not, and they come."

Human learning, without divine aid, is vain, is idle. Our discourses may be correct and beautiful, richly embellished with the flowers of literature; regular in all their parts, and combining every thing grand and sublime in their composition, but without the accompanying influences of the good Spirit, they will be like sounding brass or the tinkling of a cymbal. The Gospel which cannot be felt and realised, and has no power in it, is not the Gospel which was taught by our Lord and his disciples, nor the Gospel which has brought life and immortality to light.—The next feature of the true prophet is the energy and spirit by which he is animated.

*He has a discovery of the state of mankind by nature.* And the prophet was set down in the midst of the valley, and he was caused to pass by them and round about them, and behold, there were very many in the open valley, and lo, they were very dry.

He has a lively representation of the wretched, ruined, and undone state of his fellow men. He sees the millions who are lying composed and apparently contented in the open valley of an unconverted state. He sees the sword of God drawn upon them. He reads the hand writing which condemns them. He hears the fiery law denouncing its vengeance and utter-

ing its anathemas. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, he persuades men. With earnestness, accompanied by tears and prayers he implores poor impenitent sinners to be reconciled to God, lest, by persisting in their rebellion, they should be suddenly consumed and destroyed without remedy. Deeply imbued with a sense of man's fallen and undone condition, and seeing no way of recovery, save by an entire, full, and instant submission to the requirements of the Gospel, he shakes them with the thunders of the world to come, and ringing the dreadful peal which announces perdition to the finally incorrigible, never gives up his suit till they have grounded their weapons of warfare, and paid their vows at the feet of the Crucified. Love for immortal souls is another most important feature by which a true prophet of the Lord is distinguished.

*He is obedient to the heavenly command.* So I prophesied as I was commanded. Then I said I will speak no more in his name, but his word was a fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay. He may tremble in view of his great responsibility, and exclaim with Jeremiah, Ah, Lord God, I cannot speak, for I am but a child—or with the great apostle, Who is sufficient for these things? But encouraged by the voice of Him who dwelt in the bush, saying, Be not afraid of their faces, for I am with

thee to deliver thee—fear not, be strong, quit you like men; for I am with thee always, and I will be a mouth and a wisdom to thee;—he puts the trumpet to his lips, and sounds an alarm on the heights of Zion. Like Moses, he stands up in the gate of the camp of Israel, and cries aloud, Who is on the Lord's side?—and fearlessly delivers his message, regardless of the tide of popular opinion, the number, strength, or prowess of his enemies.

A true prophet is sent of God, and qualified with all necessary gifts and graces to render him an able and successful minister of the covenant of mercy.

THE CHARACTERS TO WHOM HE IS SENT TO  
PROPHECY.

They are here represented under the figure of dry bones. Son of man, these dry bones are the whole house of Israel.


*They were dead.* It is written, man is dead in trespasses and sins. To be carnally minded is death. By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death hath passed upon all men, for all have sinned. Not merely temporal but spiritual death, being a separation from God by reason of sin. For sin entering into every power of the soul, has contaminated the whole man, binding him up in ignorance, unbelief, and folly, and exercising a most unnatural dominion over all his



energies and faculties. But as in every particle of matter there is a principle of fire, so in dead sinners there is a principle of life, a dim perception of divine light, an emanation from that light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. This is the grace of God which hath appeared unto all men.

*They were very dry.* This is highly expressive of the sinner's lamentable condition.— Having no spiritual life, that is, none in action, no spiritual enjoyment. Not being grafted in Christ, the true and living Vine, they are without proper nourishment; and must, in time, if not resuscitated, become dead branches, parched, and the living principle wholly extinct, to be cast out into the valley of despair and gathered up and thrown into that fire prepared for the devil and his angels. And inasmuch as branches thus severed will gradually die of themselves and become useless, or fit only for the fire, so will poor sinners, if they neglect the day of grace, and trifle with the merciful offers of salvation.

*They were in the open valley.* One of their proper places, not answering the great ends for which they were created, being originally formed for the noblest purposes, even for the love and enjoyment of the great God. How can men be said to answer these ends, if they take every method they can devise to banish the important concerns of a future state from

their minds, serving sin and following the devices and desires of their own evil hearts, and that continually; permitting the God of this world to usurp that place in their affections which is the rightful throne of the sovereign of the universe. Such a course of conduct is irrational. It throws man out of his proper orbit, mars his relations to God, to other beings, and himself, lessens the force of moral obligation,  interacts the gracious designs of his Creator, rendering him a burden and an embarrassment in the scale of moral and intellectual existence

*They had no sinews, nor flesh, nor covering upon them.* Not even the form of godliness, nor the slightest mark or token by which the prophet could distinguish them as human. What a fit resemblance do they bear to outrageous, incorrigible offenders, who have thrown off all religious restraint, and make it their study to ridicule the operations of the divine Spirit. How many beings live in a manner worse than brutes! What a monster is the man who is forgetful of his God! A wonder amongst the beasts that perish!--above them with respect to intelligence and rationality; but far below them in answering the purposes of his high and noble origin.—Who would trifle on a scaffold, or frolic in the midst of devouring flames? None but fools or madmen!

“’Tis a fearful spectacle to see  
 So many maniacs dancing in their chains ;  
 They gaze upon the links that hold them fast  
 With eyes of anguish, execrate their lot;  
 Then shake them in despair, and dance again.”

*They were in their graves*, surrounded with corruption, dust, and worms, full of all manner of diseases, yet fancying themselves in perfect health. In a word, poor sinners dwell in darkness and in the valley of the shadow of death.

#### THE SUBJECT MATTER OF HIS PROPHECY.

The word of the Lord, not the word of man. The Lord said to Jonah, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching I bid thee. And the prophet Micah said to the king of Israel’s messengers, As the Lord liveth, even what my God saith, that will I speak. My preaching, says Paul, was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and with power ; for Christ sent me to preach the Gospel, not with the wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. And again, We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord.

This word we preach, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. This was the preaching of the apostolic age. It was the preaching of the primitive fathers of the

church; it is Bible preaching. Christ crucified is our theme. It is the motto upon our banner. It is the beginning, the continuance, and the end of all our ministrations. Indeed, Christ crucified is the only true foundation of all Gospel preaching.

This word proclaims life from the dead. Has man a dead soul? Christ is the resurrection and the life. The voice divine is, awake thou that sleepest, and Christ shall give thee life.

This word is also made spirit and life, for Christ is a quickening spirit. It comes in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance. Is not my word like a fire and a hammer, saith the Lord. It breaks the impenitent heart, it enkindles holy ardor in the soul. It is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, dividing asunder soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

This word, like the sword of the cherubim, moves every way to guard the tree of life. It is a flaming sword to the ungodly, and to the christian soldier it is both a guard and a light. Like Israel's pillar of fire, it guides him through the enemy's country in safety to the promised Canaan.

*We preach Christ.* Here we fix our determined stand. Here we lay the corner stone

of our building, and while skeptics are blundering in the dark, and infidels using their blasphemous wits to asperse the doctrines of the Gospel, and to tarnish the bright lustre of its glorious founder, we will urge our way through their opposing ranks, and preach the living word of the living God, which has power on earth to raise the dead to life.

Some may be ready to inquire, How can these things be? Can these dry bones live? We answer: This earth was once without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the great deep, and the Spirit of God moved upon the waters; and God said, let there be light, and there was light; and God created the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and all that is therein.

We ask in return, how were these wonders performed? Can we by searching find out God? He who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out the heavens with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance; who doeth great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number! Can we know how he causes a blade of grass to spring from the earth, how the seasons change, and suns, and moons, and stars remain fixed, or revolve through yonder boundless space? Answer who can.

—————" Enwrap creation, travel up  
 To the sharp peak of her sublimest height  
 And tell us whence the stars, why some are fix'd,  
 And planetary some ; what gave them first  
 Rotation, from what fountain flowed their light."

Finally, we preach that same Jesus who called forth Lazarus from his grave; in the streets of Nain wrested the prey from the mighty; at whose last groan the earth shook to her centre, the sun hid his face, the stars refused to shine, the rocks brake in pieces, the graves gave up their dead, and by virtue of whose name all manner of signs and wonders were wrought by the apostles and others in the early ages of christianity.

He it is, and him only we preach, who hath bowed the heavens and come down—who hath plucked up the mountains of our sins that stood in his way, and cast them into the depths of the sea—who hath sent his hand from above and saved us, and delivered us out of the great waters; yea, he hath plucked us as brands out of the burning.

*And I prophesied as I was commanded.*  
 Oh, ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord!  
 Awake! God calls upon you by my mouth—  
 by the word of reconciliation—by the triumphant testimony of dying saints—by the prophets and evangelists, who though dead still speak—by the blood of the holy martyrs—by the ashes of the venerable dead—by the shades of your pious ministers—by the mise-

ries of our frail nature—by the joys of the redeemed, and by the sorrows of the lost.

Spirit of the Lord God move over this valley of dry bones, and cause bone to come to its bone. \* \* \* Ye four winds; breathe upon these slain.

I have a message from God to thee! Up! get you out of this city—its name is destruction! What meanest thou, O sleeper, arise, and call upon thy God.

DANIEL, iv. 13, 14.

I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, behold, a watcher and an holy one came down from heaven ; He cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit : let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches.

In the history of man, the existence of an overruling and controlling providence is marked and visible. Its mysterious agency has ever been abroad, and its operations, however misunderstood by the unenlightened, have been conducted on the principles of divine wisdom and goodness. From comparative obscurity and insignificance, nations have at once emerged, and risen to the pinnacle of splendor and dominion. Like the tree figured by the prophet's pencil, they have towered into strength and consequence, and extended their branches over wide regions ; but suddenly, in the midst of all their pride, they have been stricken by the retributive lightnings of



heaven, and have been prostrated by the terrible concussion.

The fall of Babylon, the queen of cities, is a striking illustration of the doctrine of divine providence. She had filled up the measure of her iniquities; her overthrow was certain, and the execution of a just judgment only awaited the signal of him who held the helm and conducted the movements of all worlds. But his long suffering kindness prevented the stroke of vengeance. She was to receive another solemn lesson from the Almighty in the punishment of the great, the victorious Nebuchadnezzar before the thunder of his arm smote her to the dust.

Various and complicated are the means by which a gracious providence calls mankind to a sense of their danger, while they are knowingly violating the lawful commands of God, and trampling upon his authority. Moses was startled by the appearance of a bush in flames, and yet unconsumed. The Jewish nation, at Sinai's base, trembled exceedingly while its summit was covered with the terribleness and majesty of God. Balaam was arrested by an angel with a drawn sword; and here, a vision of the night troubled and alarmed a mighty king, even while surrounded by his imperial guard. The decorations of a gorgeous palace ceased to charm, neither

could the sleepless monarch be lulled to rest by the dulcet sounds of the harp and lute.

Daniel applied the interpretation of this vision to Nebuchadnezzar, and declared that the lofty tree was a representation of the stability of his throne, the greatness and extent of his power, and faithfully warned him of an approaching and desolating tempest—to which no earthly power could bid defiance.

*I saw and behold a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great.* Princes, great men, and nations, are frequently represented in Scripture under the metaphor of fair and flourishing trees:—Behold, the Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon with fair branches, and with a shadowing shroud, and of an high stature; and his top was among the thick boughs. The waters made him great, the deep set him up on high with her rivers running round about his plants, and sent out her little rivers unto all the trees of the field.---Therefore his height was exalted above all the trees of the field, and his boughs were multiplied, and his branches became long because of the multitude of waters when he shot forth. All the fowls of heaven made their nests in his boughs, and under his branches did all the beasts of the field bring forth their young, and under his shadow dwelt all great nations. Thus was he fair in his greatness, in the length of his branches: for his root was

by great waters. The cedars in the garden of God could not hide him: the fir trees were not like his boughs, and the chesnut trees were not like his branches; nor any tree in the garden of God was like unto him in his beauty. I have made him fair by the multitude of his branches; so that all the trees of Eden, that were in the garden of God, envied him.

Nebuchadnezzar was universally celebrated for his wars and victories. The spoils of vanquished nations adorned his triumphal chariot, and the laurel of glory bloomed upon his brow. He held his brilliant court in Babylon—a city beautified and adorned with a variety of costly and stupendous works. It measured forty-five miles in circumference, its walls were fifty cubits high, and their width was so great that six chariots might drive abreast upon their summits. It was situated on the Euphrates, was divided by a branch of that majestic river, over which a bridge was thrown, a furlong in length, at each end of which a magnificent palace rose to the view, glittering with gold and precious stones. But these were not its chief embellishments—nor was Babylon considered one of the wonders of the world, till its hundred brazen gates were set up, and the towers of Belus reared their impious turrets to the clouds, and Nebuchadnezzar's noble palace was erected, and the lofty

hanging gardens caught the astonished sight. And now, after all his toils, he sat himself down in sumptuous ease, having shot up into the zenith of this world's grandeur, flourishing in health of body and vigor of soul, crowned with glory, and affluence, and having no enemy able to interrupt his repose. Thus, when he seemed most secure, an unseen hand fell heavily upon him; the cup of felicity is dashed from his lips, and all his joys are, in a moment, blasted. A simple dream fills him with terror and dismay. So easily can God disturb the man of pleasure, whose ambitious projects are bearing the flowers of hope and promise, and, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, overwhelm him with the besom of destruction.

*Behold a watcher and a holy one came down from heaven.* These words refer to the attendance of the evangelical orders on God's throne, to execute the commands of the Most High. Hence the title of the eyes of the Lord which has been applied to them. They exhibit the superintending providence of God, entering into the circumstances of life, and taking cognizance of the affairs of men.

*He cried aloud.* When the Almighty pronounces judgment, whether against nations or individuals, it is announced with accompanying manifestations expressive of the divine in-

dignation. There is a crier sent forth. His voice is heard above the thunder, nor can the noise of many waters drown its unearthly utterance. His anathemas echo along the hills. His invisible tread convulseth the earth; the stoutest hearts are appalled, the haughty and the stubborn are bent, and broken under his maledictory sentence.

*He cried aloud and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit.* The sentence and the execution are almost simultaneous. The Almighty seldom delays, for any considerable length of time, the stroke of retribution, more especially when the culprit has had sufficient time and opportunity for repentance. In this instance, the sentence scarcely issues from the mouth of God, ere the victim feels the blow, and is seen writhing in the agonizing throes of a sudden and unexpected judgment.

Nebuchadnezzar, having attained the summit of his proudest hopes, and taken his standing on an eminence conspicuous above the surrounding nations, approached the fatal limit. Like a field ripe for the sickle, his arrogance and pride had eminently prepared him for sudden destruction. He had impiously attributed his success and prosperity, the famous monuments he had erected to perpetuate his

name and the memory of his warlike achievements, and the acquisition of his untold treasures, wholly to his own wisdom and power, independent of any higher aid or divine interference. How egregiously he insults the heavens in the proud soliloquy which he uttered while walking in his palace. Is not this great Babylon which I have built for the house of my kingdom, and by the might of my power and for the honor of my majesty! But hark! a voice from God's throne peals in his ears, hew down the tree.

He is hurled from his dazzling height---stripped of his royal robes---banished from the society of men, and doomed to herd with the beasts that perish, eat the grass of the field, and tent under the dews of heaven. One blast of God's displeasure hath wrought this horrible ruin!—So vain, so transitory are all the treasures of worldly accumulation, and the pomp and circumstance of princely aggrandizement.

This subject is full of instruction. It inculcates several important and useful lessons.

There are no stations in life, however elevated and enviable, beyond the influence of storm and tempest. There is nothing stable, certain, or of long continuance here. The mountain of our prosperity is doomed to be shaken. Though we should hope for a per-

petuation of earthly felicities with the most intense desire; and wisely, and diligently, provide against the ills of life, yet would the tide of joy be checked in its course, and our vain expectations be disappointed. Indeed, the elevated and seemingly secure may be considered in the greatest danger. The lightning always strikes the objects it first encounters; it spends its force upon the proud and the aspiring, and but seldom harms the unassuming and the lowly. He who grasps the world with the strongest arm, and clings to its excitements and pleasures with the greatest ardor, should never feel secure. But few, comparatively, who have attained the summit of their wishes, retain their standing beyond a given point, more especially if they have attempted, like Nebuchadnezzar, to assume a responsibility independent of that Great Being who presides over their destiny, and always punishes severely the least encroachment upon his authority and power.

Let us, then, be guarded, lest prosperity prove our ruin. The hour of calm should be the hour of preparation, of activity and wakefulness. Experience and revelation unite in testifying to this truth. We are daily called to be on the alert, to watch and pray, for at such an hour as we think not, we may be stricken down by the commissioned bolt, and ruined irrecoverably.

A watcher—a holy one is at the helm. He moves unperceived in the splendors of mid-day; the most impalpable veils are pierced by his all-pervading presence; the bright places of the earth are full of him, and the mirrored heavens reflect his glory; regions deserted and unlovely are animated by his voice, and the deepest caverns of the earth echo forth his praise. His hand is on the everlasting hills, and his breath is in all living things. The affairs of providence are under his control. His noiseless step accompanies us through every avenue of life, and never tires. He is about our path, and about our bed, and spieth out all our ways. Our most secret thoughts he scans; every word we speak is noted down in the book of his remembrance. He watches our motives, marks our actions, and pities our infirmities. He is ever with us, and ever ready and able to detect and punish us.

“How careful then ought we to live  
With what religious fear !”

This holy one has the prerogative of weighing us in the balances of the sanctuary, of counting our sands, and severing the brittle thread of life. His decree cannot be repealed. When he hath said the word, the condemned and sentenced must yield.



Let us contemplate the destruction of him over whom the watcher and holy one have pronounced the sentence of condemnation.

The axe is laid to the root of the tree, and those fibres that so tenderly interlace each other, and beautifully depict the fond endearments of life, and the close fellowship they have with our best feelings, and fondest hopes, are torn asunder by its cruel strokes and left exposed, and bare, and lifeless, to the rude gaze of every beholder. His branches are cut off—those luxuriant boughs which constituted his chief strength and beauty—he is stripped of his leaves, his ornaments and pride. They fall yellow and sear to mingle with the clods of the valley—his scattered fruit are trampled upon like the mildewed produce of a blasted vineyard.

Behold Napoleon, who once rode buoyant and fearless, on the wave of glory—whose gigantic schemes filled continental Europe with astonishment and dismay, and at the touch of whose political wand nations crumbled into ruins, and thrones were shaken to their foundations. Where now is this great man!—Where abideth this terror of kings, and of nations? Behold! his ashes sleep at the threshold of a cottage, upon a rock, which is but a speck in the mighty deep.

There is a warning voice out among men ;

it is heard amid the roar of mirth, and in the bustle and hum of business, it falls with an appalling distinctness upon the soul. In the still hour of night and of solitude, it utters sounds of terror and alarm; it is never silent; it slumbers not; it is echoed from the house of mourning and from the vaults of the dead—from the pulpit, and from the records of the past. Time in his rapid flight gives assent to its solemn, weighty appeals, and the secret recesses of every heart, reverberate the serious calls it so repeatedly gives. Thus a good God calls to his aid auxiliaries from every quarter, and sends them forth to press upon the subjects of his moral government the counsels of heaven, that they may escape the dreadful judgments denounced against the impenitent.

Finally---we may be one day safely moored in the harbor of life, with our streamers gaily kissing the breezes of prosperity---and, the next, torn from our moorings, and driven out on the mountain surges of a dark and frightful sea. One hour, in the bosom of peace and security---and the next, torn from friends, from home, and happiness, to roam unsheltered on the pathless deeps of an unexplored ocean. Now---slumbering on the lap of ease, and now ---awake to the terrors of a guilty conscience, covered with shame, and shuddering with hor-

ror over a gulf that has swallowed up our hopes, and yawns to receive us, while the watcher and the holy one are ready to pronounce the fatal words---arise, let us go hence. Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit.

THE END.

